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ABSTRACT

This book is the first significant body of literature on ethics in college admission published by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. The series is a select compilation of articles on ethics published in the Journal of College Admission in 1998 and 1999. The book is a source of information for the beginning and experienced counseling professional, as well as a tool for professionals in education who want to keep abreast of ethical issues in the field. Articles include: "Statement on Ethics" (Jerry Pope); "College Admission Professionals: Who Are We Now?" (Janet Lavin Rapelye); "College Admission: Profession or Industry?" (Lloyd Thacker); "Policies, Practices and Philosophy" (Joseph A. Russo); "Admission, Ethics and Financial Aid: Formulating and Applying an Ethical Framework to the Need-Blind Debate" (Andrew Roth); "Willingness To Use Deception on a College Application" (Ashley Rowatt and Wade C. Rowatt); "Time to Reassess the Application Essay" (Bruce Hammond); "Disclosure and College Admission" (Scott White); "Rank Bellies" (Marna Shapiro); and "Ethics: My Turn" (Lois C. Mazzuca). (GCP)

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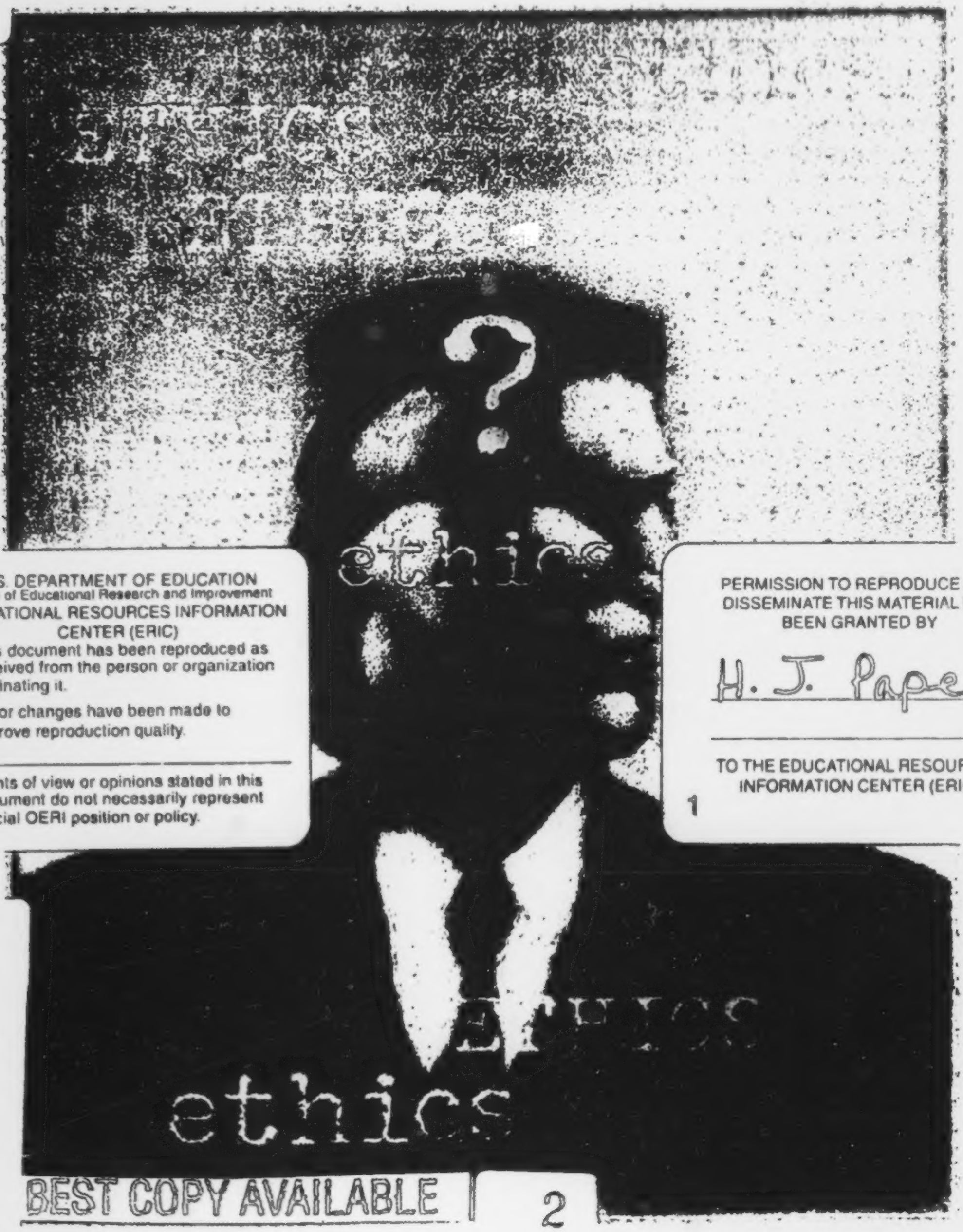
College Admission
National Association for College Admission Counseling

Ethics Series



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The Journal of College Admission

Ethics Series

Edited by
Elaina C. Loveland
Joyce Raynor

NACAC
...guiding the way
to higher education

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The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is an education association of secondary school counselors, college and university admission officers and counselors and related individuals who work with students as they make the transition from high school to postsecondary education. For more information, please visit www.nacac.com.

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Introduction

by James C. Walters

Journal Editorial Board Chair (1998–1999)

NACAC was born in 1937 when 13 colleges came together to discuss a code of ethics to better guarantee student access to higher education and scholarships. Over 60 years later, it is increasingly evident that ethical concerns continue to weigh on the minds of admission professionals. Ethical debates take place on professional electronic mailing lists and more conference sessions center on concerns of admission practices.

Some of the concerns: making the freshman class at any cost, the rise of the corporate campus, the rise of big-time athletics, the dominance of college rankings magazines, need-based admission, abuse of early decision plans, financial leveraging and bargaining, ghost-written college essays, wait-list abuses, test coaching and the general loss of civility.

To speak to this growing list of concerns, the *Journal of College Admission* Editorial Board invited and commissioned a two-year series of articles on ethics. This book is a compilation of that series.

At the beginning of a new century, can we as individuals reassert our professionalism against the ethical abuses of the admission process? This well-written body of thinking can provide us guideposts in this struggle over values.

James C. Walters served as the Journal Editorial Board chair from 1998–1999. He is the director of admissions at the University of North Carolina–Wilmington. He has previously served as the director of admissions at Miami University (Middletown), State University of New York (SUNY) Oswego, Ohio University of the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. He holds an Ed.D. in higher education from Indiana University.

Statement on Ethics

by Jerry Pope

NACAC Vice President for Admission Practices

NACAC Mission Statement

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) will support and advance the work of counseling and enrollment professionals as they help all students realize their full educational potential, with particular emphasis on the transition to postsecondary education. NACAC is committed to promoting high professional standards that foster ethical and social responsibility.

The National Association for College Admission Counseling can trace its roots to a conference in Oak Park, Illinois in March of 1937. At this meeting, a group of colleges from the Midwest Conference of Colleges assembled to discuss widespread abuses surrounding the awarding of scholarships and grants in the college admission process. This conference led to another meeting two months later which established the need for a professional association that would establish and monitor professional standards in college admission. Notes from the May meeting identify the concern for the ethical standards:

> The meeting grew out of a four-year experience of the Representatives of the Midwest Colleges to present a united front in facing the evils which we all recognize now exist in the high school and college worlds relative to the matter of scholarship and other grants, and practices relating to the admission of students...In early discussions it became apparent that some form of organization was desirable through which our common objectives may be attained. It was voted that a permanent organization of college representatives be formed to develop higher standards of practice among colleges regarding the selection and admission of students; to maintain common interests; to provide for mutual acquaintance; and to bring the personnel of the association more directly in line with the true academic functions of the member institutions. [1]

At the meeting, the group reviewed an existing code of ethics from a committee of the North Central Association on the selection practices of admitting students. The new association deemed six admission practices ethical and six unethical. Today, NACAC members know this document as the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* (SPGP).

The code of ethics in admission is the foundation of NACAC; ethics lie at the very heart of our mission. The initial purpose of the establishment of the association was to "study and promote efficient means of raising and maintaining standards of admission practices."[2] Throughout the years of NACAC's existence, we have provided ethical common ground to serve and protect the needs of students, counseling professionals and higher education institutions.

Not unlike college admission, ethics have evolved since NACAC's founding. Concerns in the beginning of the 20th century were comprised of grant and scholarship award methods and recruiting practices. Through the higher education timeline, ethics in admission have evolved, leading to even greater concerns. Why are ethics in college admission important today? Institutions and students each have their own respective wants and needs in the college admission process. Institutions want to attract an intelligent, diverse, and active student body while students want to find the right "fit." In recent decades, marketing has been introduced in college admission, which has compounded ethical concerns. Today, increasing numbers of students want to attend highly competitive schools and thus, makes admission practices even more complicated. Meanwhile, intermediaries, the guidance and admission counselors, have the conflicting responsibilty of keeping both the students and the institutions satisfied.

Ethical standards are imperative for both secondary school counselors and admission officers. NACAC upholds this belief through its Admission Practices Committee. As chairperson of the Admission Practices Committee, I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify exactly what we do to preserve the integrity of the admission field.

The Admission Practices Committee's responsibilities are as follows: to educate admission and counseling professionals and their institutions regarding the nature of ethical standards adopted and promoted by NACAC, and to assist them to fully integrate such policies and procedures into their practices; to review annually the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* of and the monitoring system in light of current practices and procedures in college admission, and to formulate and recommend changes to these documents; to promote the adoption of similar standards by non-members within the profession; and to promote awareness of ethical practices among students and their families.

Most high schools and colleges do comply with NACAC's *Statement of Principles of Good Practice*. Our membership has agreed to abide by these principles, and they are effective. Education and monitoring procedures are in place and penalties exist for schools that are not in compliance with the Statement. It is remarkable how quickly an institution in violation of the SPGP comes into compliance when faced with such penalties as exclusion from NACAC National College Fairs and state and regional programs, public censure, suspension of voting privileges and termination of membership.

Although violations sometimes occur, the majority in the higher education community behaves in an ethical manner. Our members who contact the NACAC Admission Practices Committee want to make sure that they are playing by the rules. Some institutions are often unaware that they are in violation, and that is when we help to educate. Some have inherited a situation and want to work with us to "help clean house." Others simply do not want to play by the rules. These institutions greatly disservice students and their families and, ultimately, their own institutions. A school's good name can be tarnished overnight by the unethical decision of some administrators. In fact, the state and regional Admission Practices Committee recently reviewed over 50 allegations of violations of the SPGP. Most were quickly resolved. Those that were not came before the National Admission Practices Committee. Of those cases referred to the national committee, 13 cases were immediately resolved and five are still under investigation.

While the National Admission Practices Committee deals with a number of different issues and concerns, several routinely reappear concerning the SPGP, and I would like to make reference to them.

> *College and University Members agree that they*
> IA.2c) ...will not falsely advertise or misrepresent their academic offerings. Rather, members will provide precise information about their academic major and degree programs. Such information should include a factual and accurate description of majors, minors, concentrations and/or interdisciplinary offerings that apply toward the completion of the undergraduate degree.

For example, if a school offers pre-engineering or pre-physical therapy, it cannot advertise majors in engineering or physical therapy. One state's Admission Practices Committee had its hands full with colleges misrepresenting its areas of study. In 1998, that particular state Admission Practices Committee reviewed 22 cases. All but one was resolved.The remaining case was resolved by the National Admission Practices Committee in 1999.

> *College and University Members agree that they*
> IA. 2d) ...will provide students, families and secondary schools with the most comprehensive information about costs of attendance and opportunities and requirements for all types of financial aid, and state the specific relationship between admission practices and policies and financial aid practices and policies.

This is what we know as financial aid disclosure. Obviously, our hope is that all schools will be need-blind, but if an institution is not, we want to know about it. In fact, NACAC is developing a Web site that will provide this information quickly and accurately. We are working with students and parents at

National College Fairs to have this question as one that they will routinely ask college representatives.

> *College and University Members agree that they*
> IIA. 6. ...will permit first-year candidates for fall admission to choose, without penalty, among offers of admission and financial aid until May 1. Colleges that solicit commitments to offers of admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1 may do so provided those offers include a clear statement that written requests for extensions until May 1 will be granted, and that such requests will not jeopardize a student's status for admission or financial aid. Candidates admitted under an early decision program are a recognized exception to this provision.

Our members strongly believe in the May 1 date. Some institutions have been quite creative in offering students attractive scholarships but with earlier deadlines. If students don't commit by the deadline, they risk losing the scholarship. This practice does not fall within the parameters of NACAC's ethical standards. Colleges and universities may offer scholarships, but students still have until May 1 to make their decision.

> *College and University Members agree that they*
> IIB. 10. ...should report any significant change in candidates' academic status or qualifications, including personal conduct record, between the time of recommendation and graduation, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations and if requested by an institution's application.

This is another area involving disclosure. There has been much discussion about this issue on the NACAC electronic mailing list, and at state conferences across the country. Since interpretations of the law vary, it is important to consult the legal counsel of your institution or school district. NACAC, in cooperation with the Department of Education, continues to conduct *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) workshops at various sites across the United States.

Most colleges play by the rules. The colleges that play fair succeed. It does not benefit anyone to pressure or manipulate a student into selecting a college and later have that student leave because he or she is dissatisfied. Those colleges and high schools that look for ways to bend the rules, break the rules, or just plain cheat, eventually harm themselves. A short-term gain, (i.e., getting an applicant) may be a long-term public relations nightmare. Please contact your state Admission Practices committee chair if you are concerned about a possible violation of the SPGP, or if you just want to make sure you are doing the right thing. Often, the work of the state Admission Practices Committee, and the national committee, goes unnoticed because of the confidential nature of our investigations.

NACAC is one of the few associations in the country that maintains an ethical code that is regularly reviewed, monitored, and enforced. Time has proven that education, monitoring, and enforcement of the *Statement* make it an effective tool in preserving ethics in admission. The code of ethics enables NACAC members to foster educational growth for each student in the transition from high school to postsecondary education. Ensuring ethical behavior and the establishment of professional standards on a nationwide scale is the key ingredient that enabled admission to advance to a recognized profession. Our members working together to uphold these ethical principles are the true guardians of the SPGP. Hopefully, all members will take a stand to preserve professional standards, ensure their institution is a NACAC member and endorse NACAC's code of ethics, the SPGP.

Jerry Pope is associate dean of admissions at Illinois Wesleyan University. He has been in the college admission profession for over 20 years. Pope currently serves as the Vice President for Admission Practices. on the Executive Board of the National Association for College Admission Counseling A former member of the Illinois ACAC Executive Board, he also served as the chairman of his state Admission Practices Committee. Pope is one of the founders and former executive director of the Advocacy Council for Human Rights. He holds a B.A. in political science from Illinois Wesleyan University.

Notes

1. Minutes from an informal meeting of College Representatives at the LaSalle Hotel, Chicago, IL. May 16–17, 1937. NACAC archives.

2. Ibid.

College Admission Professionals: Who Are We Now?

by Janet Lavin Rapelye
Wellesley College, Massachusetts

> Virtually every action or decision concerning the admission of young people to college involves some kind of ethical dilemma on which guidance is hard to come by. Few admission professionals are trained as moral philosophers, and in any case, even professional moral philosophers cannot always provide satisfactory answers to the many questions about the practice of life.
>
> —Jean Fetter, *Questions and Admissions: Reflections on 100,000 Admission Decisions at Stanford*

As admission professionals, we are simultaneously educators and business managers, bringing in millions of dollars of revenue to our institutions and (hopefully) spending smaller amounts in financial aid. We serve as advisors to our presidents, spokespeople to our alumni/ae and the outside world including the media, leaders to our staffs, and, if we are fortunate, counselors to our college students. We deliver the class to the faculty, calculate the statistics for our trustees, fill out questionnaire after questionnaire for guidebooks and survey groups, and work with parents, guidance counselors and students.

Given the many hats we wear, how do I gauge my success? Looking at the bigger picture, I feel my office is moving in the right direction when: a reporter gets the right message; other offices are able to state what admission does; Wellesley is seen as a more selective school than it was 10 years ago; the students, the selectivity, our image and mission are incorporated into our senior staff decisions; projects such as our market survey are moving on schedule; my relationships with others are harmonious and if they are not, it is for a larger goal; I can articulate to the outside world that one of the historical goals of a liberal arts education is not for personal gain, but for the "common good," and that is as true today as it was 100 years ago; we can work with a family to find the means to get their daughter here for four years and convince them that the value-added in a Wellesley education is more valuable than the dollars, and it *will* be worth their sacrifice; I go the bed at night feeling like I made a difference in this very small corner of the world.

The job is never boring and it has its rewards, yet I am concerned about how far we are "stretched." I am even more concerned about how far I push my staff these days. The hardest parts of my job are when the above moments do not go as planned. Some days, I gauge success simply by the fact that all the admission staff members are doing their jobs and no major problems are hampering their ability to get their work done. Other days, it is not that easy. With 22 staff members, the interruptions are constant (every 11 minutes on average, I read somewhere) and a good day is when I can get work done at my desk between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. My goals are to hire good people and make sure they have the space, tools, technology, training and connections to do their jobs; to always have the vision of where we are going; to push the limits of admitting the best possible class.

As a profession, what are we actually doing in admission? We are looking for academic excellence and intellectual curiosity, and we are finding it. We are looking for diversity, but in the broadest sense of the term: racial, ethnic, geographic, socioeconomic, and talents. We value art, music, theater, sports, political activities, religious commitments, after-school jobs, taking care of relatives—however students spend their time. We are looking for quality. As Arlene Zallman, professor of music at Wellesley College, once told me: "If you add one outstanding voice to a chorus, it raises the whole level of the chorus." Professor Zallman's comment reflects what we are doing in admission. When we admit outstanding students, they raise the level of discourse, the level of thinking on our campuses and isn't that what a liberal arts college is about? In addition to the musings above, four significant areas of concern stand out to me as we begin the new century: Technology; The Rating Games and the Effects on Education at all Levels; Race and Class; and Financial Aid.

Technology

Having seen over 21,000 applications come across my desk and the desks of my staff and the faculty on our board of admission, all of whom deserve credit for admitting these classes, I am struck by how much technology is changing the process. Students can now surf the World Wide Web and get information about colleges either directly from our home page or from other guidebooks that are now online. We have students from as far away as the Ukraine and the Philippines sending us e-mail asking for applications. Students can look up financial aid information on the Web and all they need to know is the address, which looks something like seaweed to me: http://www.studentservices.com/fastweb. The language has changed and so have the procedures. At Wellesley, we are on the verge of receiving applications electronically, and we are letting other schools work out the glitches before we move to a completely electronic system. Technology is an example of where it pays sometimes not to be first, but to be in the 15 percent below the top. Technology may be providing us with opportunities for electronic communications, but it will never substitute for the personal contact that occurs as our residential campuses create a unique learning environment.

When I go to conferences, I find that more and more of my time is spent talking with colleagues about our "systems" and the "net" and how we will handle the volume of students communicating with us electronically, for example, as they start taking our Web site tours from home. What happens when we have 500 students a day taking a tour? Some will see it as a success, yet monitoring the process, to say nothing of the security. we will need to protect our internal system from hackers, and it will take more and more of our time and resources. I worry about the students who have no access to computers and how they will be left behind. I worry about the growing gulf between the "haves" and "have nots" in our high school populations and how we will get them up to speed once they have arrived on our campuses, if they are not too disadvantaged to even make it through the selection process. I am optimistic and enthusiastic about these new modes of communication, although I see some of these advances as one more advantage for the already advantaged students.

The Rating Games and the Effects on Education at All Levels

The residential liberal arts college is as important now as in the past—and not just for the education in the classroom, but also for the learning that happens in the dorm, on the playing fields, and over dinner in the dining hall. The peer group on our campus is even more important today than in previous years, since we are being rated on the quality of our students by *U.S. News & World Report,* to single-out one publication. The strength of our student body is critical. More importantly, however, when you have a strong peer group, the students learn from each other. This peer group then becomes part of the alumni/ae body after four years and the perceived value of being in one of the top college or university's alumni/ae network is significant. The students and parents understand this relationship in the admission process, and therefore, the admission stakes have never been higher.

Much has been written about "The Winner Take All" society. Certainly more students will be coming through the pipeline of college admission in the next ten years. This growth will not simply be a question of numbers; it will be a question of greater stratification of the colleges. Those with strong endowments and bright student bodies will attract the best professors and also will continue to attract the best prospective students. I am not sure this is necessarily a good thing for all.

We are seeing this phenomenon at the lower levels of private education in our country. The coaching, prepping and counseling for preschool, kindergarten and elementary school are almost alarming in some cities. The parents think: If I can get my child into this "elite" private elementary school, they will get into the best secondary school and therefore be able to go to an Ivy League caliber college or university. They realize it will take hard work and in many cases they are willing to do that homework themselves! They are often missing the point that this is the child's experience, and they are not realizing that finding the right "match" in 12 years may not mean an elite school, as they see it.

We have become a celebrity society. We revere our celebrities and if they have gone to college, we are intensely interested in where. When celebrities talk about their college experience, students listen. And to be honest, as admission offices, we publicize our alumni/ae celebrities, knowing that the public takes note of their accomplishments. In most cases, our alumni/ae deserve the recognition for their college success. However, I worry about the student misconception that following a famous person will result in personal success at that institution. The guidebook rating systems and these celebrity moments have nothing to do with the education the students will experience when they step on our campuses.

Many fine public, private and parochial high schools in this country do a superb job preparing students for college. We have outstanding high school teachers who are setting high expectations for their students. Many more schools, however, miss the educational moments along a student's path, so that by the time the student is a senior, they are not ready for an elite college or university and they might have been with the right training. There is a difference between being elitist and being truly elite. For me, elite means a striving for excellence, holding the highest ideals and goals, and not settling for anything but the best. I wish more of our high school students were able to have an elite secondary school education. Despite our huge applicant pools, I wish more students were ready to come through our doors. Having said this, it is humbling to watch year after year, the incredible achievements of the seniors.

Our public schools have excellence at the top of a class because of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs and the research that has been applied to "gifted" programs. We also have excellence at the bottom of a class due to state legislation of special needs, however those needs are defined. The middle group, however, seems to be left out more, to have fewer resources, and therefore less attention. I worry about the untapped potential of this group of students. What might happen if they had been in smaller classes, or had more access to technology, or had greater funding for their programs, or had been pushed harder at specific points of their development? Would they be more prepared and better able to take on a rigorous college program when they graduate?

For the top students, the scheduling and lessons start early. Do children play anymore? Have you seen the incredible schedules now of younger children being channeled into after school programs? Sometimes these activities are superb and meet a child's interest and a parent's need to work. I wonder what are these students going to be like in 10 to 12 years when they are applying to college. What will happen to the students who, through no fault of their own, do not have access to these early programs, cannot afford them even if they did, and are therefore not as directed in their academic and extracurricular life? Both extremes are a concern. Will the students and families who choose not to buy into all the lessons and scheduling be left behind? Are we losing sight of what is important?

Of course, the top colleges and universities can be accused of driving this process. We are so competitive due to our enormous applicant pools that only the extraordinary and, I will venture, the precocious, stand out in the volume. The high school in our town tells us they cannot change their Advanced Placement Program because of parental pressure. The parents want what is best for their children. They see change as risky and they are not willing to take "risks" with their child's secondary school education.

We are being judged by the outside rating systems whom we bring in, and not by the final product, with the exception of those few celebrities. We are judged more by our win/loss record in admission, and less by the "valued added" in our educational programs. I have heard it likened to judging hospitals on how sick its patients are as they are admitted, rather than how healthy and how healed they are when they leave. What's wrong with this picture?

Race and Class

Elementary and secondary schools in this country are not on a level playing field and those of us who travel see the stark contrasts between those students who have advantages and those who have few resources. This class issue has grown on our campuses over the past 10 years. We have the student on financial aid who rooms with the student who drives the BMW. Socio-economic disparities affect whether a student works on our campus and for how many hours he or she is employed; her choices about where and whether to study abroad junior year are often dictated by family finances. The amount of debt with which a student graduates will affect career choices. Most students today are acutely aware of the sacrifice required to attend college, especially the expensive institutions. The question of class is a reality in their lives.

The class issue is independent from, although related to, issues around affirmative action. The focus on affirmative action and the changes in California and Texas are challenging to those of us who believe in the educational value of a multicultural campus. The book, *The Shape of the River,* by Derek Bok, the former president of Harvard University, and William Bowen, the former president of Princeton University and current president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is a systematic study of 34 elite colleges and universities and how, in a smaller subset, their affirmative action policies affected the classes matriculating in 1976 and 1989. The book counters many of the conservative attacks on affirmative action. It allows those of us who believe in affirmative action to have research behind us to defend these programs. I mention it here as a reference for us all. Cornel West, in his book, *Race Matters,* writes about affirmative action and what it can and cannot do. Those of us at schools where we still have the luxury to practice affirmative action, must. It will not be a panacea for the future of our society, but it will move us forward in providing an education for students from all backgrounds. Building a multicultural community is as important for our students in living and learning together as it is for a foundation for our future.

> Progressives should view affirmative action as neither a major solution to poverty nor a sufficient means to equality. We should see it as primarily playing a negative role—namely, to ensure that discriminatory practices against women and people of color are abated. Given the history of this country, it is a virtual certainty that without affirmative action racial and sexual discrimination would return with a vengeance. Even if affirmative action fails significantly to reduce black poverty or contributes to the persistence of racist perceptions in the workplace, without affirmative action black access to America's prosperity would be even more difficult to obtain and racism in the workplace would persist anyway.
>
> —Cornel West, *Race Matters*

Financial Aid

The issue of financial aid is one we live with on a daily basis, whether initiating new policies to remain competitive, reacting to the many new ways to view the middle class, or defending our policies internally and externally. Michael S. McPherson, president of Macalester College, and Morton Owen Schapiro, dean of the college of letters, arts and sciences at the University of Southern California, in their book, *The Student Aid Game*, analyze how colleges and universities meet need and reward talent. They recognize the pressures admission offices face in balancing institutional priorities and policies with students' needs. The different financial aid packages are confounding now to the family and the guidance counselor and the following terms are some, but not all, of the terms colleges use to explain how they award aid: need-blind, need aware, need sensitive, need conscious, admit-deny, merit aid, differential packaging, preferential packaging, "no-need" aid, and gapping.

> Colleges and universities have become much more sophisticated in their use of tuition discounting and creative financial aid packaging in order to serve their many objectives—whether the principal goal is maximization of net tuition revenue, the enhancement of widely reported selectivity indicators (raising average SATs, lowering the admit rate, and so on), or an increase in the diversity of the student body.
>
> —Michael S. McPherson and Morton Owen Schapiro,
> *The Student Aid Game*

McPherson and Schapiro are emphatic in stating that the institution is responsible for honesty in conveying to the public whichever financial aid policy it is using. Schools must balance their budgets. Parents and students understand this, they have to balance their own budgets. There is no longer a moral high ground in how financial aid is delivered. What is important is the candid conversation between the institution and the family as they start and continue in the admission process, about what they can expect in terms of the financial aid process.

> Although the moral choices colleges face are complex, there is in our view, one moral principle that should be wisely respected in schools' admission policies. This is the principle of honesty. Schools should inform applicants and high school guidance counselors of how they make their decisions. There is a good deal of pressure on schools to maintain a claim to being need-blind when the reality of their policies is more complicated. Many schools, for example, are need-blind for freshman admits but not for transfers, and others, as we have noted, are need-blind for the first round of admits but need-aware on the waiting list. Schools should be explicit about such policies.
>
> —Michael S. McPherson and Morton Owen Schapiro,
> *The Student Aid Game*

Conclusion

So, who are we as admission professionals? We are asked to be scientists in analyzing our data and artists in shaping our class. We wrestle with technology and rejoice when the system allows us to move ahead in our work. We struggle to articulate our financial aid policies to the public and sometimes even to our internal constituencies. We advocate for what is right and good in our institutions and for our students. Do we have less control over our destinies than in the past? Perhaps. Most of us went into this profession as educators and while we may still hold educational values, the opportunity to educate seems to happen less frequently. I see my job as one of service to the institution and to the students. The heart of our work, after all, rests with the students, their talents, their intellect, their personal qualities. They shape our campuses more than we shape them. Alexander W. Astin, professor of higher education and director of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, has been studying college students for decades. In his book, *What Matters in College?: Four Critical Years Revisited,* he writes:

> In many ways the philosophy underlying a liberal education is a testimony to the value of the peer group. In other words, a liberal education assumes that a little bit of serendipity is a good thing. Allow young people to go away from home and to live together in an academic environment for a while, and some good things will happen. Give these young people a good deal of freedom, coupled with some new challenges and new responsibilities, and some good things will happen. Often we really have no idea what these good things will be, but the students will seldom disappoint us.

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College Admission: Profession or Industry?

by Lloyd Thacker

Jesuit High School, Oregon

The gleam in a student's eyes
that salutary gleam
that liberal arts gleam
that ah hah
that glittering resplendent window to the future, gleam
nothing else matters

Allow me to speak among friends. I am concerned about our profession; I am concerned about liberal arts education. I believe the condition and fate of both are fundamentally linked, and that they are both threatened by elements of commercialism.

A long-time friend of mine who is in charge of school and college relations for Oregon's public colleges and universities occasionally teases me about my idealism. He characterized today's efforts as "a sporadic spurt of romantic rebellion (against cultural/economic forces)." But in my own defense, this silver-haired idealist recommended that I "make this spurt count." I do not know if any of you recall Eugene Lang imploring our profession to serve (and appreciate) students as dreamers. If we are to embrace this challenge, it seems that each of us should be part dreamer. As such, we may move closer to the "profession" end of the "profession-industry" spectrum if we appreciate, value and serve that gleam.

I should continue in the name of B. Alden Thresher, an educator whose comments on college admission were published approximately 30 years ago. Before reading Thresher's book, *College Admissions and the Public Interest*, I believed I could say something original and important about the state and fate of our profession. Now, realizing that what remains original is probably not important, and what was important is no longer original, I am left bemused—twenty-some years of trying to reconcile ideals and practices, of trying to make sense of what seems to be a growing abyss between the values of liberal arts education and the way it is promoted, deflated by a person who left the profession before I even entered college.

As trustees of students' interests and welfare we have a heritage: a heritage that binds us, grounds us, motivates us, directs us and even defines us as a profession. We would do both well and good to recognize this! For it is self evident that the future of our profession will depend on our courage to see beyond the limits of our own institutional self interests, to recognize the limitations and dangers inherent in institutionally driven private-sector tactics, and to develop strategies which serve the interests of students—strategies rooted in the ideals of liberal arts education.

It is not difficult to envision industry and profession as being different. For our purposes, let's think about industry as the commercial production of goods and services to benefit a particular business. According to Webster's dictionary, profession will describe an occupation (conveniently) as "requiring training in the liberal arts and sciences and advanced study... involving interest, character, standards and values beyond self service." Liberal arts education should not need defining with this audience: it is discussed in most of our colleges' mission statements. Even the technologically oriented colleges and large universities embrace the ideals of intellectual breadth and depth, critical thinking, moral and civil courage and long range vision. Former Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti described liberal arts education as the, "heart of a civil society." Ernest Boyer said that "seeing the connectedness of things" is one of the goals of studying the liberal arts. President Kennedy talked about how valuable the liberal tradition was in preparing people to "take the long look ... undisturbed by self interests and prejudices." Could liberal education be the continuing discovery of one's own ignorance? Let's examine some evidence in light of these terms.

- A full page recurring advertisement in *Newsweek* depict ing a large group of anxious students—the caption reads: "Only a small group of these students will get into the college of their choice ... improve your odds with *How to Get into College*." Does this message serve students' educational interests?

- Fifteen years ago, the College Board claimed the SAT such a useful tool that coaching could not increase test scores. Today, the College Board is a leader in marketing college admission-advantage paraphernalia, from test preparation to online essay evaluation service. As an organization embracing the public trust regarding college education issues, is there any hint of conflict of interest? If it sells, does that mean that it's good for education?

- And what about the way we talk about our colleges and our students:

1. The admission dean of a prestigious college speaks to a group of counselors about the length of his college's waiting list; the dean says, "we put many students on the wait list so as to not give counselors the wrong impression about who is admissible." Whose interest is being served?

2. A well known high school counselor describes how she "marketed" her students "to get into the one best college" in front of a NACAC audience—as if that practice is common and acceptable. She was never questioned. And what about the high schools and counselors who proudly claim to have "gotten students into" many fine colleges?

3. A prominent admission dean one evening told me that only 25 percent of his university's students were admitted for academic reasons. The next day one of his assistants said, "Oh it is less than that and next year we will be recruiting juniors in the spring for early action." This at one of the most competitive colleges which admits 60 percent of its students early. What is the purpose of this type ofdeliberate strategy?

4. The very obvious sales pitches I overhear from my office as admission officers talk with our students, including: "We have the best faculty"; "We have a superb

student body"; "Our drama program is second to none" and "The difference between our students and those at other colleges is the passion they have in the classroom."

5. The well-known veteran of several admission operations, consultant, author, etc., who two months after imploring our assembly not to use the SAT for educational purposes, sends a mailing to high school counselors boldly advertising the test scores of his college's first-year students?

- And NACAC conferences: By observing who attends and what goes on during our conferences, it is easy to conclude that these conferences function as arenas for socializing and hobnobbing among our more elite colleges' and schools' representatives and vendors. In fact, over the years the trend has accelerated. It corresponds with a similar trend revealed by comparing program guides from the 1990 and 1997 NACAC conferences. Consider the following:

Program Guides	**1990**	**1997**
Number of Sponsors	0	15
Number of Vendors	52	107
Number of marketing-oriented sessions	7	22
Number of non-institutional panel participants	12	29

- A few new practices and trends reveal: 60 percent early decision admission at some of the most competitive colleges; price leveraging; preferential packaging; front loading; preferential admission by intended major; restructuring of need analysis; increased affirmative action in recruiting athletes (almost all athletes to the Ivies and Stanford are admitted early); high school counselors are less than candid in promoting their students and schools; increasing competition, suspicion, and secrecy characterized by one dean's comments: "we are close to living lies"; 30 percent of students applying to the more competitive colleges use consultants and test prep services. Why the increased competition among those colleges which continue to attract increasingly larger concentrations of top students? The top 30 privates now get nearly 92 percent of students with the highest SAT scores. "Insensate avarice" was Thresher's description of similar but less pronounced practices during the early sixties.

I wonder what Thresher, the educator, would say about Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford redefining need and excluding home equity from the financial need analysis. This obviously delineates another stratum within the Ivy League: a stratum destined to become even more competitive and selective. What about Moody's (referring to Moody's Investor Service) practice of seeking colleges' SAT averages as indicators of institutional financial strength? Finally, at my school of relatively affluent students, we saw a 50 percent one-year increase in scholarships offered by colleges. Are these needy students or targeted and leveraged commodities?

- The infusion of private business people, practices, positions and values into college administration: board members; college presidents; enrollment managers; deans for freshman retention. These positions are increasingly filled with people who have been successful in business outside of education. What does it say about the values and convictions of a college that has to hire professional marketers to promote it?

- The way colleges describe themselves in their viewbooks and posters. Are the depictions accurate and honest? Do they clarify rather than confuse distinctions among colleges? Do they reduce education to a product or portray it as a process? While considering the following sample of promotional excerpts, imagine how a college might review an applicant who describes himself or herself in a similar fashion:

  College:"One of the top 10 colleges in the nation"
  Student:"One of the top 10 students in my class."

- The multi-million dollar, anti-educational industries of college ranking, test and application coaching increase access and visibility for the privileged few. (There is a test coach in New York who charges $375 for 50 minutes of coaching.) The colleges' responses to the rankings are revealing. Colleges that do not make the lists criticize ranking as irresponsible, yet when these same colleges do make the list they often use rankings to suggest educational superiority.

- Listen to parents:

  Parent to son (in my office):
  "You only got an 1100 on your SAT; you're a failure."
  Parent to daughter in my office:
  "You need to capitalize on your investment in sports. Use it to your advantage to get into the best college."
  Parent to me:
  "The importance of football in the admission process is so uncanny that we ought to put steroids in baby food."
  Parent to me:
  "Please help me, I do not know how to groom my daughter for college."

Parent to son in my office:

"If you don't get into one of US *News & World Report's* top 10 colleges you will go to a state school."

Parent to me:

"I know there are other ways to get into college than just being a good student."

Parent to me:

"We just completed the applications and want you to check them over."

Parent to me regarding her nine-year-old daughter:

"Please do some research so we can decide which sport our daughter should play in order to maximize her chances of getting into an Ivy League college."

- Finally, let's hear from students, as they have talked with me:

"If I went to a public high school, then I wouldn't get into a good private college."

"My parents really do not put pressure on me; I am responsible for putting pressure on myself. I did well on the SAT because my parents bought the Stanley Kaplan course and the Princeton Review course and I've done them several times."

"I hope I can find a college where I can change my mind."

"I have to apply early somewhere, it's the only way I can get into a good college."

"If I do not get 50 more points on the SAT, I won't qualify for the scholarship."

"I'll have to go to a public college; I'll be stupid."

"Help me get into the perfect college."

In absence of argument to the contrary, it certainly seems that our profession is behaving more as an industry than most of us who ascribe to NACAC principles would care to admit. To be fair, it could be argued through gross generalization, that the history of American higher education has been a continuous struggle between what might be called the corporate and the ethical or societal functions of the university. One could say that the balance has shifted back and forth over time, and that we are currently experiencing a correction from two decades of excess infusion of public money (an excess that created a sense of unreasonable entitlement among students), and a sense of financial security among institutions.

However, returning to Thresher's book, written during the sixties—a time when money was flowing into colleges—we may find his concerns relevant even then. They seem prescient and urgent now. In the inappropriately market-defined and inflated hierarchy of competitive college admission, Thresher wonders whether students become so caught up in the processes of choice, selection, comparison, and competitive differences among colleges that they lose sight of the main issue, "the education itself." The student is thereby encouraged to think of education as something that is done to him or her.

Where in any discussion of liberal arts education, in any college's catalog, is the idea that education is something that is done to a person, that it is a product? The idea is blasphemy to any educator. As long as educators (faculty members) continue to oversee catalog publication, we should still have an educationally defined value point of reference. However, few high school students read catalogs, and most are affected by the techniques, practices, hype and distortions we have recounted above—those things which have helped turn education into product and student into uninspired consumer. According to University of Virginia's Professor Mark Edmundson, "Colleges do not have admission offices any more, they have marketing departments."

Among other commercial culprits, college marketers contribute to the consumer mentality of today's college students. Students do not want to be confronted, students want education to be as beautiful as the college's video or viewbook; students have been promised nirvana and denied the gleam.

One could suggest that the characteristic which most clearly differentiates industry from profession is the way in which (or even if) an institution balances serving the competing interests of public good versus its own institutional needs. Certainly colleges and schools can claim to be financial institutions, and therefore be obliged to follow efficient business practices. Alternately, they have also been thought of as servants of the public good/the public interest. According to McPherson and Schapiro in *The Student Aid Game*, "Because colleges are not simply businesses but rather institutions held in trust, it is especially important that their policies are capable of surviving examination by their constituencies." In this examination and on this idea of balance, I wish to invite some critical thinking: Is this idea of balance real and honest? If so, what scale and units are being used? What is being weighed and by whom?

Certainly, balance sheets and budgets, though quantitatively expressed, are subject to personal bias and prioritization. Accordingly, the financial/institutional needs side of a school or college's balancing act can attract a variety of advocates bearing measurably heavy demands. But, who advocates for the role of the public good, particularly in times of perceived scarcity?

What kind of convincing counter-balancing argument can they bring? Is there public good balance sheet?

In light of recent evidence discussed previously, I find the idea of balance conveniently (if not deceptively) simplistic. Market forces are ruled by rationality and measurability, price not value. The public interest benefits of liberal arts education at best are only partially measurable, yet greatly knowable. Furthermore, the idea that one can or should measure accurately and completely the benefits of liberal arts education lacks courage, validity, hope, humanity and connection with that gleam.

Those of us who have worked in admission offices might be able to recognize the existence of two cultures on campus: the marketing/admission culture and the academic/intellectual culture. The side that has been winning most of the "balancing" acts, is concerned with "what can and must be done," *practical* questions. The other side is dedicated to teach ing students to ask, "What should we do?" "What is right?" and other *normative* questions. Several educators, in addition to those mentioned above, have pointed out the need to ask *normative* questions during the positioning, pricing, and packaging of an institution and in the recruiting and selecting of students. This idea, while ethically and educationally appealing, has lacked deserving and compelling discussion of how and why institutions could do this. Institutional imperative to serve the greater good seems to be lacking; as is professional discussion and action about this cause.

And so, we have many challenges if we are to reassert our collective identity as a profession concerned with serving the educational needs of students in transition. To propose to our presidents a model for decision making which rises above the measurable, and to make policy recommendation based on that model might be beyond our power. However, to suggest and show that such a possibility has institutional as well as public value, might be a worthy cause. One which if worked on collectively, could help rescue our profession from the jaws of industry.

What Should We Do and What Can We Do?

In a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a former managing editor of *US News & World Report's* rankings criticized his critics from academia for being too "passionate." Well, this market-defined expert on quality education should know that passion is one of the distinguishing factors of real education.

We need more passion in education, not less. In the wake of what has been discussed, it could be argued that the more passionate we become about liberal education, the more professional we will become. Certainly passion is not all we need, but it should be the basis of who we are as professionals. Without passion, that natural and humanity-directed impulse to learn, to discover and to connect with the public good, liberal arts education and our profession cannot be served.

So are we passionate about what we do? Do our actions, interactions, publications and policies reflect a connection to the values and processes of liberal arts education, and to the public interest or to our own institutional needs beyond salesmanship? That is the most fundamental question we must ask ourselves as institutions and as individuals.

With the proper commitment to and belief in liberal arts education, various strategies and tactics can be discussed.

Here is a partial menu for change:

1. Unite to take on the industries which are feeding off our own uncertainty, our lack of commitment to liberal arts education and to the public interest. We must be able to marshal the resources and human ingenuity to redefine education as a process rather than a product. As educators we should be able to cut through the commercial interference and captivate the gleam. It is there, waiting. We can save our profession and liberal arts education from commercialism; we can do it proactively as advocates.

2. Be courageous, stop fooling ourselves, and get rid of the SATs. *The Case Against the SAT*, a comprehensive study of the use and values of the SAT, concludes that the added predictive values of the SAT over rank alone is never more than 1.3 decision errors per 100 admission decisions for either freshman GPA or graduation rates. Try this: imagine a fulcrum upon which you are balancing the *educational* costs and benefits of using the SAT. Go ahead, the fulcrum is filled with your definition of educational value, things like learning, diversity, confidence, passion, etc. How can any objective educator conclude that the institutional-specific benefits of increasing the ease of decision making and perpetuating the myth of academic excellence through the use and advertising of test scores offset the tremendous educational and public interest costs. These include contributing to the notion that student and institutional quality can be measured by a test. (If that is true, why don't colleges ask their seniors to retake the SAT and see how their students have progressed in college. What an outrage this would bring from

faculty—the same faculty who encourage the admission of higher SAT scoring applicants). The use of the SAT deflates the self images of well-meaning students; it encourages ranking, test preparation, stratification, etc. It is conclusive: admission deans trade in your ounce of security for a pound of liberal arts and public interest cure.

3. Get rid of Early Decision. Developed as a marketing and revenue-generating tool, disguised with deceptive rhetoric, it continues to contribute to competition, stratification, avarice, and the notion of education as status symbol.

4. Be honest, upfront, complete and proactive in providing information about schools, colleges and students. No college, student or school is perfect. Let's be open and upfront with weaknesses as well as strengths.

5. Act as if we have the courage of our convictions. If liberal arts education is about curiosity, truth, critical thinking and serving the greater good, then all we do to interact with students should be consistent with these principles. Responsive marketing which says, "What do you want, we will give it to you," should be replaced by encouraging marketing which says, "This is what we have, and this is why you need it." We cannot afford to betray our belief in education by succumbing to commercialism. All admission tactics should reflect the mission of the college or university.

6. Recognize that we can be effective by working collectively, as a national organization, as a group of colleges or counselors defined by common applicants, stature or interests; and as counselors, etc.

7. All admission representatives should read *College Admissions and the Public Interest*, *The Student Aid Game* and *The Case Against the SAT.*

8. Every admission representative should begin his/her high school presentation with an introduction to liberal arts education before describing the distinctive attributes of their particular institution.

9. NACAC should have a public interest/liberal arts advocacy committee, a committee which takes a system-wide view. With a purposeful and concerted use of public relations mechanisms to serve this end, such a committee could raise the liberal arts tide in America for all kinds of colleges and universities, and for students, too. Imagine a brochure or press release dispelling some of the anti-educational myths: that there is one perfect college; that SAT scores are the most important part of an application; that education is something that is conferred; that admission processes at the most selective colleges are fair, equitable and scientific; that where you go to college will determine your earning power; that liberal arts education is not practical, etc.

On this point I must suggest that the Ivy League is uniquely positioned to make a difference for our profession and for American higher education. Please—stop acting like a bunch of coaches bent on winning at any cost; how many applicants do you really need? Combine your efforts and win one for liberal arts education, for the public interest, for your own institutions. Cooperate, work collectively to describe your institutions' differences; work as educators to dispel myths; work to be honest with each other; unite to defeat the anti-educational industries described above; unite to address how your collective actions can contribute to liberal arts education and the public interest. You may begin by agreeing to say no to the SAT and to the ranking industry. If you must compete with each other, compete for ideas, for leadership in saving our profession and the liberal arts from rampant commercialism.

Conclusion

As commercialism has seeped into the marketing of liberal arts education, it is threatening society's only defense against such rot: the ability to think critically, to analyze carefully, to evaluate thoroughly, to pursue truth and to serve the public interest. These are, I believe, the values and goals of liberal arts education.

In order to begin to requalify ourselves as professionals, we can all recognize that market driven, institutionally rationalized strategies are threatening liberal arts education. Corporate-like behaviors based on "My institution right or wrong" and "What do you want? We will give it to you," serve only short-term economic interests and create long-term educational costs. This realization must rattle us at our core. Beyond this, we must be motivated to act individually, collectively and courageously.

Marketing strategies conceived by liberal arts purposes can be appropriate and effective. I see no virtue in supporting that which is educationally questionable.

Ultimately, real liberal arts education is, in Thresher's words, "autotelic"—a self-rewarding occupation. "There is deep delight that is a profoundly human characteristic." Remember the gleam? Real education is also very practical but not necessarily quantifiable: to serve it requires understanding and passion. In a larger context, the battle in and for the soul of liberal arts education can be seen as one battle in a struggle over what values will characterize society in the 21st century. Can we play a role in this battle by defining and asserting our professionalism? Will we reassert our professionalism by looking beyond the competitive advantage of our own school or college's interest to serve a broader function as trustees of students' interests and welfare? Self critique can be the ultimate form of self-flattery, especially if it results in "reprofessionalism."

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Policies, Practices, and Philosophy

by Joseph A. Russo
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As the 21st century approaches, speed, efficiency, accuracy, service, image, revenues and sound business practices are major factors and goals in college admission and financial aid. A possible casualty in this modern scene may be the principles and good practices of our profession, a proven method for helping young people through the very important transition from high school to college. Certainly the importance of each student's decision is no less significant today than it was previously. Indeed, a college education is increasingly essential to every student's future economic and social welfare, as well as to their good health and sense of civic responsibility. This essay explores historical trends, poses some questions for policymakers to consider, and offers a benchmark against which to measure our practices as the competitive landscape of college admission and financial aid shifts.

Financial Aid—Center Stage

For many students, the cost of college is a significant factor weighing in more than ever in their decision-making process. Financial aid was originally conceived as a behind-the-scenes factor that would attempt to remove cost and affordability as the primary question, thus leaving other considerations of academic and personal fit paramount. Now, financial aid dominates many students' decisions.

When the admission and aid functions first became linked, common principles and good practices were established. Some suggest that this began formally in the early 1950s, as college doors opened wider to more students primarily through the GI Bill following World War II. This closer relationship between admission and financial aid functions continued to develop through the Sputnik and National Defense Education Act of the later 1950s and truly began to mushroom through the mid 1960s with the passage of the landmark Higher Education Act of 1965 and subsequent amendments.

The principles and good practices were in written and unwritten form or, as it were, "commonly understood conventions of the profession"(Self-Regulation 1991). The College Board and the National Association of College Admission Counselors were among the more active leaders in formalizing such codes and understandings. All were grounded in common sense; a traditional respect for education; and a clear sense of character, common courtesy, responsibility, integrity, honesty, and of the importance of the individual needs of each and every student. Indeed, the term "professional" was understood to include an essential embracement of ethical practices, a basic respect for each other, and a publicly disclosed set of operating principles.

According to these principles, families, students and institutions each bore certain responsibilities in the admission and financial aid process. For example, the family was responsible for paying for the education to the extent that it was capable. Implicit in this number one principle was the belief that an education was something to be valued dearly. It assumed the family was willing to plan, save, and sacrifice. The student, as a member of the family and the primary beneficiary of the process, was expected to contribute as well. The financial need of a student, measured as fairly and consistently as humanly possible, would be an essential starting point in distributing the limited resources made available to assist those individuals who demonstrated such need. The professional aid administrator's review was the final and key step in this evaluation process.

Institutions embraced these principles, government and private financial aid organizations subscribed to them, and policymakers and economists also contributed regularly to their continued development and refinement. Perhaps the high water marks of such cooperation and mutual support occurred in the mid 1970s with the Keppel Commission. The Commission, charged by Congress with reviewing a student aid delivery system that had become overly complex, re-enforced these commonly agreed upon principles amidst the growing demands of an exploding higher education environment. The dominant and original goals of access and equity continued to be the most basic guiding principles. Yet, also in the 1970s, legislation passed that entitled certain students to federal aid on the basis of a numerically driven formula.

The Emergence of Enrollment Management

The 1980s brought high inflation, major shifts in government funding from grants to loans, further significant changes in student demographics, and a complete take-over by policy-makers of what had heretofore been a broad, community-based consensus to some basic tenets for student aid administration. Some institutions, over-expanded with facilities, tenured faculty, and long-term obligations, were forced to consider new tactics and strategies to maintain student quality, diversity, or in some cases, stable enrollment. If enrollment numbers were down, budgets would not balance and deficits would soon need to be addressed through financing and/or cutbacks. The maintenance or even survival of some institutions seemed to require different approaches to distribute still limited financial aid resources and to find new means and rationale to expand these resources. Enrollment management and net revenue strategies were ways to meet these new challenges.

The term enrollment management encompasses the strategies of an institution to meet its enrollment goals for recruitment and retention of students, while maximizing institutional revenues. While such policy does not necessarily suggest any less concern for the student or for student "fit" at a particular institution, the need to meet institutional budgetary constraints provides a different focus for framing admission and financial aid policies in reviewing individual students' records. Perhaps a true measure of the ethics of such practices is how willing and open the institution is in publicly describing these policies.

Merit (non need-based) scholarships grew dramatically, typically at the expense of any increases in need-based aid (Wick). Studying this issue is often made more complex because some of this aid is awarded to students who would have demonstrated financial need anyway, at least for part of the award. Indeed, part of the challenge in any such an analysis is made even more difficult because of the different definitions of "need" currently part of the everyday landscape. Federal methodology is largely politically driven and can more often be an "eligibility for federal aid" than a good measure of a family's ability to pay. The College Board term, "institutional methodology," is employed by several hundred institutions and attempts to use some sound economic principles and assumptions in producing its results. Some institutions use a "mix and match" approach with certain components of both methodologies, effectively producing still another result. In some cases, this sometimes selective "mix and match" approach could be affected by the individual student's desirability to the enrollment manager.

One needs to do what one needs to do in order to survive ...and, not surprisingly, timeless principles were "refined" and in many cases, totally ignored as no longer appropriate. The rationale was that students who had achieved should be rewarded and institutions should invest in the future leaders of the country. Access, equity, and opportunity for all, were no longer primary. Principles, good practices, and institutional missions took a back seat.

Federal and state policymakers have contributed to the changing priorities in other ways as well. Public subsidies for state higher education have decreased, while new tax policies, such as Georgia's Hope Scholarship and the nationwide Hope

Tax credit, provide a different basis for distributing government assistance. The government student aid programs, which continued to grow in the 1990s, have shifted significantly from grants to loans. A system of need-based grants for providing access and equity has changed dramatically into a system that provides limited choice at best and no access or no equity at worst.

The Robin Hood theory suggests that those who can afford to pay are providing their tuition dollars for the "expense" created by "discounts" (a.k.a. "scholarships") awarded to those targeted in an enrollment management paradigm. In this way, the institution is effectively using operating revenue (i.e., tuition), to fund merit scholarships. Not too far behind the scenes, such a practice is truly an expense that must be offset by revenue, thus forcing tuition increases, generally the most common source of revenue for private institutions and perhaps for a small but growing number of public institutions as well. The discounts continue to grow at a disturbing rate, as the marketplace needs of an enrollment management/net revenue-based environment continue to demand more resources to keep up with the need created by other institutions trying to remain competitive. Offers of scholarship assistance in such boundless, no-holds-barred battlefields may indeed appear to be great for the consumer, but have become a major expense for institutions. And there may be no end in sight to such bidding wars. In the end, tuition discounts may be a Pyrrhic victory for consumers, who ultimately will carry the burden of having to pay more tuition.

College Costs and Affordability

What has been the impact on college costs and affordability? Where are the principles and good practices? What about access, equity and opportunity? What about the value of education for the individual and society? What about institutional mission? What about student indebtedness? Are cost controls needed? What is driving institutions to continue to increase costs beyond the consumer price index? Will Americans ever be able to see their children enjoy the same benefits of further education which they may have received—a question that this generation may be asking for the first time in our country's history?

Enter the Cost Commission, stage right. Congress established the Cost Commission in 1997 as an independent advisory body and called for a comprehensive review of college costs and prices. The above questions need to be addressed by the admission profession, but one answer was provided by the Commission which found that the "cost" of institutional financial aid (i.e., discounting), was one of higher education's foremost "cost drivers."

The misinformation about the cost of college has always been one of the profession's perennial challenges. In recent years, the media has exaggerated this problem beyond the normal level of confusion. The annual announcements of next year's tuition increases, too often emphasizing the highest cost schools in the country, have contributed to the hyperbolic frenzy. Massive attention has created an unnecessary and over-dramatic sense of panic among too many families and attracted the attention of policymakers understandably seeking sympathetic solutions that might become assets at election time. The growing spectacle of national rankings by major weekly news magazines adds even more fuel to the exaggerated perception (Archibold 1998).

Nonetheless, it is that same perception that built the momentum for the Cost Commission study. Indeed, one of its clear conclusions was that, despite the widespread affordability of college for the vast majority, American families wrongly believe that high costs will make a college education impossible (Stringer 1998).

In a letter to college presidents, Stanley O. Ikenberry, president of the American Council on Education, asked institutions of higher learning across the country to join together to attack the alarming gap between what the public thinks and what is reality. "The goal of the campaign is to redouble our efforts to explain costs, the prices we charge students, and the amount of financial aid that is available," he said. Similar efforts are underway on a number of fronts across the country. A 1998 newspaper article in *The Review* entitled, "Parents Overestimate College Costs," reported that a survey commissioned in Pennsylvania found that respondents have such an exaggerated idea of how much college costs that they're worrying instead of planning. The survey found that only one in 10 respondents could choose the right price range when asked to estimate the cost of tuition at Pennsylvania's 14 state-owned universities; they've convinced themselves that the cost was so high, it's pointless to try to save enough. It is somewhat comforting to see some media trying to put this issue in more realistic terms, as was captured in an October 27, 1998 headline in *USA Today*: "Overestimating the Cost of College: The Bill May Not Be As

High As You Expect." Nonetheless, the hype continues in other headlines such as "Paying for College: How High Can Tuition Go?" from *U.S. News & World Report.*

In actuality, as the data clearly states, college can be very affordable. Moreover, when more properly viewed as the value and investment it can surely become, rather than as a consumer purchase, its worth becomes even more understood. All of us as educators need to do a much better job promoting education as an investment for both the individual as well as for society.

A Time to Step Back

We must also rethink the current policies and practices of our profession. Changes in needs analysis announcements made this past year by Ivy League institutions suggest that we need to really take a hard look at what we are doing and where we are heading. Changes in needs analysis methodology, which now more than ever bring chaos to the process, suggest a fundamental review of the current economic assumptions upon which these formulas are based. Are our current policies and practices moving toward a future that totally contradicts our historical institutional missions and the greater societal goals of broadened opportunity and access (Delbanco 1996)? If we look to a continued expansion of some of our current strategies, will the long term financial consequences to students, families, the institution, and our society be fiscally sound? Michael McPherson and Morton Shapiro ask many of these questions in their recent book, *The Student Aid Game* (1998). Phil Wick has also challenged some of these policies in his landmark publication, *No-Need/Merit Scholarships: Practices and Trends, 1943 to Present*

(1997). Another positive development is an effort by the College Board's College Scholarship Service to create a more realistic needs analysis methodology that more reasonably measures family ability to pay, and encourages rather than discourages planning and saving for college costs.

Hopefully, the college savings plans being established by a growing number of states will continue to gain support. Similar college saving efforts led by organizations such as the Tuition Plan Incorporated, which would remove geographic and sector restrictions, deserve legislative authorization. Indeed, if the ultimate common goal is to provide broadened educational opportunity to as many individuals as possible, all of these measures and more like them should be supported.

Our profession needs to challenge itself and should begin by re-establishing our primary and historical role. Although not appropriate for all postsecondary institutions, those colleges with more traditional missions and student bodies should honestly review current polices and practices. Researchers, policy and budget analysts, policymakers and, yes, philosophers and dreamers must together establish long term goals of what we want to be. Finally, a clearly understood and defined goal and a mission statement is essential. Otherwise, as Lewis Carroll expressed in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, if you don't know where you are going, any road will do.

Questions to Guide our Policies

As we review each of our policies and practices, it might be helpful to ask the following questions:

1. Does the policy or procedure pass the common sense test that the typical taxpayer, student, parent or person on the street will be considering? Another way of posing this question might be: would a clear and public disclosure of it be something that we would be proud to print?
2. Does it broaden or restrict opportunity?
3. Does it foster or detract from excellence?
4. Does it promote education as an investment and value?
5. Does it encourage saving and planning?
6. Is it fiscally responsible in the long term?
7. Does it pass the test for simplicity, consistency, and integrity?
8. Is it accountable to the individual, society, and for future generations?
9. Does it meet the historical mission of the institution?
10. How will it be judged by historians?

There certainly could be many more questions to consider, depending upon the institution. Yet these seem the most fundamental and essential and appear to be, as philosophers might suggest, the absolute truths that should be the basis for any solid, inherently good educational endeavor. Policies, procedures, practices, programs, principles, policymakers, perspectives...perhaps it will take one more "p"— a philosopher, properly postured to put us back on the proper path.

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Admission, Ethics and Financial Aid: Formulating and Applying an Ethical Framework to the Need-Blind Debate

by Andrew Roth

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When you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

—Mark Twain

Introduction

Admission professionals need to balance two seemingly contradictory tasks: 1) counsel young people as they negotiate the school-to-college transition and 2) recruit a class sufficiently large to meet the college or university's enrollment goals and, thus, its budgetary requirements.

These conflicting role expectations—counsel students versus recruit bodies—place admission officers on an ethical hot-seat whether they work at elite universities pressured by the need for both diversity and quality, or at state universities ever-mindful of their enrollment funding formulas, or at tuition-driven private colleges only one or two "bad" (read under-enrolled) classes away from the financial brink.

Admission officers must serve two masters whose interests are not always the same. As a result, they frequently find themselves in ethical binds, and need to think through their conflicting role demands to arrive at acceptable norms of behavior, i.e., ethical behavior. This paper will explore the history and current status of admission and develop an approach to resolve ethical problems. The final section will apply the approach to the need-blind versus aid-blind controversy, an admission situation rooted in the counseling versus recruitment dilemma.

College Admission: A Brief History

The history of admission can be divided into roughly three eras: 1) everything prior to 1930, 2) the rise of selective admission between 1930 and 1975, and 3) the sales and marketing era since 1975. These dates are crude approximations, particularly in regard to the substantial period of time prior to 1930, but they roughly correspond to the development of American higher education from elite to meritocratic to mass education (Howard 1986). From the colonial colleges to the rise of the university in the late 19th century, American higher education was reserved for the socio-economic elite and/or those interested in careers in the ministry (Rudolph 1962). Although antebellum colleges struggled to raise funds and to secure students, there was nothing comparable to an admission office in the modern sense of the word. Admission standards, such as they were, were enforced by the faculty, usually with the college president as chief faculty member. A student's suitability for admission was ascertained during an interview on campus or by a recommendation from a private tutor, since secondary education was neither universal nor uniform in quality.

Selective admission began at the end of the 19th century as emerging universities and established colleges needed some way to assess the relative merits of students from newly proliferating high schools. The College Entrance Examination Board was founded in the first years of the 20th century to assess the academic skills of students from geographically diverse areas through entrance examinations (Thresher 1989). Selective admission, as currently understood, did not begin in earnest until the 1920s and 1930s with the appearance on campus of an administrative officer responsible for coordinating admission activities. Ironically, just as colleges were attempting to establish in-take offices to assess and counsel prospective students, recruitment also began. As Thresher notes, the "decade of 1930–1940 was a period of desperate and anxious recruiting" (1989). At this same time, the National Association of College Admission Counselors was founded explicitly to develop a code of ethics to control the recruiting excesses of colleges attempting to survive the Great Depression (Howard 1986).

Although the distant past—antebellum colleges combing the backwoods for students and depression era colleges engaging in aggressive salesmanship—was not as pure as the purists would like to believe, the years immediately after World War II through the early 1970s were halcyon times for higher education. The post-war and post-Sputnik boom in student demand and enrollment created the simultaneous transformation of American higher education into both a mass enterprise and a meritocratic higher education system. What made this seeming paradox possible was a simple excess of students—there were more students demanding entry to higher education than there were places for them. As a result, some institutions could raise standards so as to only enroll an elite student body and both non-elite privates and burgeoning state institutions could enroll as many students as they could serve. During this period, admission was either egalitarian and open or meritocratic and selective; usually the latter, because, with more students than places, all colleges could afford to be at least marginally selective (Ebel 1982).

During this period, admission officers functioned as "gatekeepers," deciding who they would admit to the academy and who they would "counsel" elsewhere. Admission counselors were functionary—adjuncts of the registrar's office or else second or third level administrators within the student services hierarchy. Several recent alumni would act as campus liaisons to secondary schools. They worked with the secondary school guidance community to establish norms of reference as to the "type" of student who would best "fit" on a given campus, met with a faculty committee to decide which applicants in point-of-fact seemed most likely to "fit," and then "counseled" those students through the conclusion of the matriculation process. Moll (1992) characterizes the period as "tell" and not "sell" and many admission officers wistfully recall it as a counseling paradise. The job had little pressure, a high status environment (colleges and universities), and at least a veneer of significant social utility.

When combined with the religious roots of American higher education, this 30 year interval creates a powerful professional image of the admission officer as a teacher/educator/communicator. The image underlies many of the tensions in the contemporary world of admission, for the good times did not last. Around 1975, concerns grew about a shortage of students necessary to fill the huge educational enterprise that had grown since World War II. This shortage, which never actually quite materialized, generated two trends. One was the increasingly intense competition among students for entry into America's most elite colleges. The other was the transformation of admission into a counseling/sales/recruiting office as small and non-elite private and public colleges and universities struggled to stay in business. As Riehl states, the admission officer evolved from a "gatekeeper" to a "wrangler rounding up students" to a marketing consultant plotting direct mail campaigns to an enrollment manager (1982). In 1982, Riehl could not foresee that the job would evolve into a high-pressure challenge in an environment under siege and newly questioned about its social utility.

Admission—The Current Reality

As a result of the history outlined above, admission officers today work in a profession suffering a fundamental values conflict—are they counselors or recruiters, teachers or salespeople, ministers or hustlers? In this conflict Moll (1994) asks, "Is the Dean of Admission Now Outside the Academy?" Zuker (1992) bemoans, "Admission Anxiety in the 1990s: Are We Part of the Problem or the Solution?" and James (1993) states, "It is unfair to place the entire burden of enrolling new students on the heads of admission directors." What all of these commentators are bewailing is a sense of loss, the lost innocence of a pure counseling past, and the lost nobility of being teachers and educators. Nowhere has this sense of loss been better articulated than in McDonough and Robertson's "Reclaiming the Educational Role of Chief Admission Officers" (1995) or more emotionally expressed than in DeLaHunt, et.al.'s "Admission as Ministry" (1986).

Further, common to all these complaints is a profound anti-business bias. This bias is an attack upon the very idea of business, sales, and marketing as corrupt and immoral activities, as expressed in White's "The Myth of the American Dream: Whatever Happened to Honesty in College Admission?" (1989), Hansen's "Buying Students—Where Will It End?" (1986) and Mackey's seminal "The Selling of the Sheepskin" (1980). Jump asks the question most pointedly, "... ultimately, is college admission to be a profession or a cut-throat business?"(1995).

Most counselors probably do not know that the American Marketing Association has a code of ethics, the very first rule of which is: "The basic rule of professional ethics: not knowingly to do harm" and its chief tenets are "honesty and fairness" (Kinnear, Bernhardt, and Krentler 1995).

Why is there such a profound anti-business/anti-sales bias in a profession that has embraced fervidly the techniques of the very profession it demonizes? One reason, as Chambers (1980) notes, is that education has responsibilities to society different than business and those responsibilities increase to the extent it works with children and those at an informational or maturational disadvantage. Also, as a non-business profession, education attracts people whose motivations, aptitudes, and values are different than those of business people. Specifically, they are markedly less selfish and more selfless. They react emotionally and negatively when asked to assume the behaviors of businesspeople because doing so is antithetical to their values. Lastly, educators do not understand what businesspeople do. The result is simplistic moral judgments, or, when asked to perform as businesspeople, incompetent performance, which only reinforces the emotional and negative reaction.

Another response to sales and marketing in admission is for educators to protect themselves with documents like the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (1996), the code of ethics from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (1996), similar documents from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and, most spectacularly, the National Collegiate Athletic Association's several hundred pages of double column rules and regulations governing the recruitment of student-athletes. What this proliferation of rules and regulations speaks to is a profession (or series of interrelated professions) that has lost its moorings and its moral anchor. These rules and regulations are what Laney (1990), in discussing Rawls's theory of justice, refers to as thin—they lack moral depth. Absent a deep understanding of what behavior ought to be prescribed, admission officers and others involved in academic recruiting resort to detailed, and often conflicting, proscriptions. The result is a profession in turmoil, arguing over whether or not its practitioners are counselors or salespeople.

This essay will not attempt to demonstrate that competent selling is in fact consultative and, therefore, first-cousin to counseling, but instead, will attempt to develop a process of thinking about the apparent counselor versus recruiter conflict that resolves the paradox and provides admission officers with a method for choosing a course of action when confronted by morally ambiguous or mutually exclusive demands.

An Approach to Ethics

The admission profession needs an approach to the counseling/selling paradox that recognizes the legitimate interests of all parties—students, parents, guidance counselors, college representatives, admission officers, the colleges and universities, and, ultimately, society. We need a methodology for analyzing, evaluating and ordering the conflicting interests so that individuals can choose the morally correct course of action, or, to quote Spike Lee, "do the right thing!" Such a methodology, or ethical calculus, can be constructed by borrowing from the work of Kohlberg (1981; 1984) and Rest (1979; 1986; 1994) and merging it with Brady's "Janus-Headed View of Ethical Theory" (1990).

An ethical calculus involves four steps:

1. Be sensitive to the ethical moment.
2. Identify the ethical interests of all involved parties.
3. Understand oneself, one's values, and one's interest in the outcome of the ethical moment under consideration.
4. Develop and implement a plan of action based upon one's understanding and analysis of steps one through three.

Step one requires an individual to be sensitive to the ethical moment, to recognize that the issue at hand is an ethical issue, an issue that involves making a value judgment(s). Ask, "What are my duties and responsibilities to myself and to others?" For admission officers, "others" are not only the student-clients, but also past, present, and future student-clients, the institution for whom one works, the general college and university admission community and, conceivably, society as a whole. Admission officers must determine their obligations to each of these parties.

Just as step one identifies one's duty to all the participants in a given case, step two identifies their interest in the case's outcome, which may or may not entail a duty or responsibility on their part to oneself. Other relevant questions are "How are the parties' interests intertwined?" and "Is/are there interested third parties beyond the immediate moment?" For example, if it is not in a particular student-client's interest to attend our college and we turn him/her away and, in so doing, fail to meet the enrollment quota, what will be the reaction of the Board of Trustees?

Having identified the interested parties and their stake in the situation, step three asks that prior to making a decision and undertaking any action, one do a self-analysis and determine one's own values. This step involves both first and second order principles. First order principles are bedrock or core values, those values with which if one is not in tune, one cannot experience moral harmony. To ascertain one's core values, the law of publicity is helpful. Ask, "Would I want this act publicized on the front page of tomorrow's *New York Times*?" Fundamentally, the question is "Can I live with the consequences of the decision/action?"

Implied in first order principles are multiple second order principles, such as truth, honesty, and fairness, about which and to which interested parties may have different definitions and different reactions. For example, a friend arrives regaled in a hideous, floral printed, mauve shirt and asks, "How do you like my shirt?" What does one do—tell the truth, lie, or duck? How does one decide what to do? Brady, in *Ethical Managing: Rules and Results*, develops "A Janus-Headed View of Ethical Theory" in which he merges Benthamite utilitarianism and Kantian formalism to create what I call a utilitarian/formalistic dialectic that can help one decide what to tell one's friend and, by extension, can help admission officers determine their second order priorities (1990).

Brady's theory measures utilitarian decisions against formal claims by at least three criteria. The first criteria is ordering—does the decision pass the first test of the law of publicity? If so, does it pass a series of second order tests— e.g., is it true? If not, does it provide sufficient benefit to overcome for the actor the pain of dishonesty? Which leads to a second criteria—does it pass the test of the principle of non-malevolence, i.e., does it avoid willfully causing pain for selfish interests? And, lastly, the third criteria, does it pass the aesthetic test—does it create moral harmony and a sense of optimization for the community, which might be understood as a first step toward universalizability?

The fourth step in the ethical calculus is to develop a plan of action. Having identified the problem as an ethical moment, having identified all the interested parties and the nature of their interest and one's own responsibility to them and to oneself, and having clarified one's own set of values and a methodology for applying them to the current context, one must decide which alternative courses of action are available. Each alternative must then be evaluated in light of the discoveries one made in steps one through three. After one has evaluated the alternative courses of action, one must decide, choose, act. Having chosen a course of action, one must be willing to publicize it, which is the first order principle of the law of publicity and primary test of the decision's ethical legitimacy.

Applied Ethics

In this section, the utilitarian/formalist dialectic is applied to one of the current hot ethical issues in college admission—need-blind, aid-blind, or need-conscious admission. First I will describe the problem and then outline how it might be solved.

Chace announces "Financial Aid's New Playing Field" (1994) and McPherson and Schapiro herald "The Search for Morality in Financial Aid" (1993) while Cage proclaims "The 'Need Blind' Admission Dilemma" (1993) and Ehrenberg and Murphy ask "What Price Diversity? The Death of Need-Based Financial Aid at Selective Private Colleges and Universities" (1993). The demands of a changing economy have caused colleges and universities to rethink their financial aid policies. One of the pillars upon which the financial aid system was built during the halcyon days of the 1950s, '60s and '70s was that admission decisions would be made without regard to an applicant's ability to pay. The corollary pillar, honored system-wide as often in the breach as in the observance but universally honored among the wealthiest institutions, was that a college would provide full financial assistance to all students it admitted. Both of these tenets are included in the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* of the National Association for College Admission Counseling; hence, the public, which had come to think of financial aid as an entitlement and not, as originally intended, an institutionally bestowed privilege, erupted when first Smith College, then Lehigh University, and then a cascade of other institutions announced they could no longer afford to be need-blind.

The problem: should a college admit an applicant whom it knows cannot afford its charges (tuition, fees, and room/board) and to whom it will not award full-aid (i.e., will not meet the applicant's demonstrated full financial aid need)?

Step One. This is an ethical moment. Two key assumptions about American higher education are involved: 1) that educational opportunity should be available to all regardless of their economic resources and 2) it is the duty of colleges and universities (along with society at large through its governmental representatives) to provide resources to students in need of financial assistance.

Step Two. Who are the interested parties? They are the student, the student's parents/guardians, the student's guidance counselor, and the admission officer. In addition, they are the admission officer's peers at other institutions, the admission officer's college/university, the larger world of higher education in general, and, lastly, to some extent, American society.

What are the various parties' interests? The student and his parents want access to a quality education at a price they can afford; the guidance counselor wants the student enrolled at a college that is a good "fit," i.e., serves the student's needs (one of which is financial); and the admission officers at other colleges who might also be interested in this student want a sense that all colleges are operating according to an agreed upon set of ground rules.

The admission officer, on the other hand, wants to meet enrollment and financial goals to which a student who cannot pay is a hindrance; likewise, the college wants to provide the maximum quality education it can muster to a mix of talented students able to contribute to funding that quality education. American society wants an educated citizenry, but has a diminishing ability to provide an education to all prospective students without colleges and universities also contributing to the financial aid mix. Clearly, even this superficial review indicates that the various parties have different and conflicting interests.

Step Three. Which of the admission officer's values are relevant to this situation? To whom does the admission officer owe primary loyalty—the student as a representative of all students, the college as an employer, professional colleagues at other colleges engaged in the larger enterprise of helping students sort out their college choices, or American society and its pursuit of equal educational opportunity? (A variable which makes the case more complex arises if the college in question is an "elite" institution, admission to which can be considered tantamount to admission to America's socio-economic elite and the fulfillment of America's democratic/meritocratic ideal.) Would the admission officer be willing make his or her loyalties public? The second order principles at work in this problem are honesty (publishing clear financial aid guidelines), fairness (treating all equally, all of the time), and truth (informing each applicant of their position relative to all other applicants for admission and financial aid).

Step Four. Having identified the ethical moment, reviewed the interested parties, and assessed the relevant values, what alternative courses of action are available? One is to continue need-blind admission and admit students without regard to ability to pay and meet their full, demonstrated financial aid need. A second possibility is to practice aid-blind admission and admit students without regard to their need for financial aid, but do not award financial aid to everyone, either in full or in part. Another option is need-conscious admission, which admits only those students who can afford to pay their own fees or can afford to pay some pre-determined proportion of their fees. Lastly, admission officers could devise some combination of all three choices.

All four are less than satisfactory, for none meets all the needs of all the interested parties. As a result, a utilitarian question arises—which option creates the maximal good? Probably option two, aid-blind admission, which admits everyone without regard to ability to pay, but only aids as many as possible. In fact, this policy can be made stronger by adopting a policy of aiding only those who need aid and then at a pre-determined uniform percentage of total need, thereby apportioning limited funds to as many students as possible. While no student will receive all the financial aid they require, all students will receive financial aid in the same proportion of their total need. Although in absolute dollars some students will have greater remaining need than others, proportionally, all students will be treated equally. Given finite resources, it is a conundrum: to benefit some more than others in absolute terms but treat all proportionally equal, or to benefit some more than others in absolute terms and to treat all proportionally different. The former seems preferable, though not perfect, it does seem to meet the aesthetic test of balance and harmony, i.e, like cases are treated in a like manner. This also ought to maximize the institution's revenue, which was the object of need-conscious, but at the expense of equal access without regard to economic resources. Need-blind achieves the goal of equal access, but negates the institution's interest in generating optimal (if not maximal) revenue.

Does option two meet the first order test of the law of publicity? Yes, because in providing equal access to admission and equal access to financial aid funds, it meets the second order criteria of fairness and honesty. In addition, it passes the aesthetic test, for it seems right for an educational institution to provide equal opportunity without regard to ability to pay. Further, albeit in a different way than the *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* intended, it meets the dual test of admitting without regard to need and aiding to the maximum extent an institution's funds permit. Option two is threatened, however, if the college awards financial aid by any other means than a uniform, pre-determined percentage of demonstrated need (i.e., if the institution practices preferential packaging and awards aid first and in disproportionate amounts to those students it most desires to enroll). Within the context of option two, preferential packaging violates the second order criteria of fairness.

Lastly, option two meets formalist criteria because it can be universalized, or applied to all students equally, all the time, and everywhere. In theory, there is no reason why every institution in the United States could not practice it. In practice, this will not happen, unless athletic, artistic, academic, and other non-need based, preferential financial aid policies are abandoned. That, however, is a different issue than the need-blind issue and leads to the larger question, "In what way(s) is it permissible to treat similar people, i.e., students, differently?" The answer, of course, is that although the students are similar, they are not the same.

One of the ways in which they are different is that they bring different talents to the institution, talents for which the institution, like any other agent in the market for diverse talents, is willing to pay. The ethical question then becomes, are all students in similar categories being treated ethically—in a way to equally maximize the good for all members of the category everywhere, all the time?

Although the utilitarian/formalist dialectic does not necessarily provide clear and simple answers, it does offer a method of thinking about problems of moral choice more supple and productive than the simple retreat to rules. To that extent, it can be a useful first step in constructing an admission code of ethics.

Conclusion

The utilitarian/formalist dialectic in combination with the ethical calculus provides a way for solving the admission officer's ethical dilemmas. By providing a larger context than simple rules and regulations, it permits an analyst to identify a case's core issues and to construct a values taxonomy against which to assess them. In doing so, it provides operational guides sensitive to the contextual nuances of a changing environment, but yet anchors analysis in a timeless quest for that which is always true everywhere.

Areas for further research would apply the technique to such admission questions as:

1. Should race and gender be used as criteria in admitting students to the university?

2. Should selective colleges admit all minimally qualified candidates by lottery?
3. Should a college admit marginally qualified students in order to meet enrollment budget goals?
4. Should all colleges adhere to a uniform candidate's reply date?

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Willingness to Use Deception on a College Application

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Abstract

Deception is one strategy that people use to make themselves appear to be more desirable or competent than they really are. High school students rated their willingness to lie about certain aspects of themselves—such as their past academic performance, school involvement, initiative, and other personal qualities—as if they were applying to a prestigious college or a less prestigious college. Students were more inclined to falsify or exaggerate information that would be harder to verify, such as their goals for the future, than an ACT or SAT score. Students' reported willingness to use deception on a college application did not depend on institutional prestige. Some recommendations for detecting deception are discussed.

Prospective students provide a variety of personal information about themselves on college applications. The assumption made by most is that the details provided by applicants are accurate and true. In most cases they probably are. In some instances, however, false or misleading information may be included in an application.

In this research we examine how willing college-bound high school students would be to falsify specific information on a college application. Topics about which students are more willing to lie should yield meaningful insights into the admission process. Below, we discuss the multidimensional nature of deception, provide some evidence bearing on the frequency that people lie, and offer a review of the reasons people deceive others. Findings from our survey of high school students are then reported and discussed.

Types of Deception

Lying and deception, used interchangeably, involve intentionally presenting false or misleading information. Several types of lies are used in everyday life (DePaulo, et al. 1996). Outright lies are total falsehoods, completely contradictory to the truth. Exaggerations are lies in which facts are overstated to convey an image that exceeds the truth. Subtle lies involve evading or omitting relevant details and telling literal truths that are designed to mislead.

Many prospective students have the necessary aptitude, experience and potential to merit admission, without having to tell outright lies or to overstate qualifications. Even when students don't meet admission standards, counselors discourage students from using deceit for personal gain. It would be difficult, for example, for a student to falsify an official academic record or a standardized test score. Nonetheless, subtle, covert tactics of deception may be used by some.

Frequency of Deception

The use of lying and deception in everyday life is quite frequent. A nationwide survey of over 5,000 people showed that 97 percent of respondents had lied (Venant 1991). In a recent study, DePaulo and her colleagues asked adults in a college and community sample to record lies they told, no matter how big or small, for one week (1996). People admitted telling a lie in 25 percent of their social interactions. Most of the lies were not regarded as serious, but served to smooth the interaction. In employment settings, 35 percent of resumes are estimated to contain outright falsifications (Saxe 1991).

Given the frequency with which adults report using deception, it is expected that some students will be more willing to use subtle forms of deceit to increase their chances of gaining admittance to college. Students may not be alone in using deception in the college admission process. College recruiters and admission counselors are challenged to attract competitive applicants that meet enrollment standards. In the process of describing their institution, its programs and the opportunities that abound, some may exaggerate the strengths and minimize the flaws, in a way that makes the college appear to be more desirable than it really is (White 1989).

Reasons for Deception

Few people condone the use of deception in any situation, for any reason. Yet, some forms of communication do not seem to have developed solely for the dissemination of the truth. Some common reasons for lying include accomplishing goals, sparing others hurt feelings, avoiding trouble, enhancing self-presentation, concealing personal information, and avoiding embarrassment (O'Hair and Cody 1994). Specific reasons for telling lies on an application might include gaining a tactical advantage, accomplishing a personal goal of being accepted, appearing competent, or protecting oneself or one's family from the possible dejection or embarrassment associated with rejection. Students who perceive that they deserve admission but are denied, experience a temporary loss of self-worth (Coffey 1986). To compensate for the negative consequences of being rejected, some students may overstate their own qualifications.

Overview

This study was designed to determine how willing high school students would be to use 35 different tactics of deceit in the college application process. The topics for the 35 tactics included lies about academic performance, employment experience, school involvement, technical skills, interpersonal skills, and initiative/motivation.

Methods

Participants.

College-bound students from a metropolitan magnet high school (61 male; 61 female) were invited to complete a survey on college application strategies. The sample included 115 seniors, 5 juniors, and 2 students who did not report their grade level. Participants who were 17 years old or younger received the consent of a parent or guardian. The ethnic make-up of the sample was fairly representative (71 percent Caucasian; 20 percent African-American; 4 percent Asian-American; 1 percent Hispanic; 4 percent not specified). Students were ensured confidentiality.

Materials and Procedure

Several teachers allowed questionnaires to be completed during class time. Two versions of the survey were distributed. One version suggested that the participant was applying to a prestigious college with competitive admission standards. The other version suggested that the person was applying to a less prestigious college with lower admission standards. Participants then rated how realistic they thought their chances of being accepted to a college of that type would be (1 = not at all realistic, 7 = very realistic).

Next, students rated their willingness to falsify or exaggerate specific information on an application, using a 7-point rating scale (1 = not at all willing, 7 = very willing). Finally, students answered six questions asking about their own honesty level in every day situations (e.g., I would tell the truth even if it would get me in trouble; I can look someone in the eye and tell a lie, if for the right end).

Results

As expected, results of an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed that students in the prestigious college condition thought their chances of being accepted were less realistic (mean score = 2.89), on average, than students in the less prestigious college condition (mean score = 5.74), $F(1,121) = 69.30$, $p < .0001$. Each participants' responses to the 35 items were summed to create an aggregate variable of a willingness to lie. The participants' overall willingness to lie on an application, depending on the school's prestige, was examined. Participants in the prestigious condition (mean score = 2.71) and non-prestigious condition (mean score = 2.79) did not differ in their willingness to falsify information, $F(2,119) < 1$, ns. Males (mean score = 2.86) and females (mean score = 2.64) did not differ in their willingness to falsify or exaggerate information on a college application, $F(2,119) < 1$, ns. Because there were no differences between males and females, or between participants in the different conditions, the data set was available for descriptive analysis as a whole.

Table 1 shows the specific types of information students are more and less willing to lie about in a college application. Overall, the juniors and seniors were not overly willing to lie (mean score = 2.75, standard deviation = 1.33), but indicated that they would falsify certain information about themselves. High schoolers were most willing to exaggerate their future goals,

TABLE 1

High School Students' Willingness to Lie on a College Application

	Topics of Deception		Mean	SD
1.	Exaggerate my goals for the future.	*	4.16	2.33
2.	Exaggerate how hardworking I am.	*	4.16	2.19
3.	Exaggerate how much initiative and how self-motivated I am.	*	4.07	2.10
4.	Exaggerate how outgoing I am.	*	4.00	2.18
5.	Exaggerate my ambitiousness.	*	3.99	2.16
6.	Exaggerate my high self-esteem.	*	3.81	2.16
7.	Exaggerate how good my relationships have been with peers in the past.	*	3.79	2.13
8.	Exaggerate the activities I was involved inwhile in school.		3.42	2.20
9.	Exaggerate my interest in the arts.		3.42	2.00
10.	Exaggerate my sense of humor.		3.27	2.12
11.	Exaggerate my interest in sports.		3.20	2.20
12.	Exaggerate my problem solving skills.		3.16	2.11
13.	Exaggerate my interest in the outdoors.		3.15	2.04
14.	Exaggerate my social skills.	*	3.14	1.98
15.	Exaggerate my technical, job related skills.		3.14	2.14
16.	Exaggerate my experience working with computers.		3.06	2.09
17.	Exaggerate my academic class rank.	+	2.77	2.29
18.	Falsely say I was well respected by my past employers.	+	2.61	2.11
19.	Mention the names of influential community persons.		2.61	1.99
20.	Say I had more social involvements while in school than I did.		2.50	1.90
21.	Mention a lot of hobbies that I don't have.		2.36	1.91
22.	Falsely say I was in clubs or organizations that I wasn't.		2.30	1.95
23.	Say I have a higher GPA than I do.	+	2.28	1.94
24.	Say I have worked for someone I didn't.	+	2.10	1.99
25.	Falsely say I have won awards that are hard to verify.	*	2.01	1.71
26.	Have someone else write the required application essays.		2.01	1.75
27.	Provide bogus, flattering references.		1.96	1.80
28.	Say I have been to differnet parts of the world on educational trips.		1.91	1.70
29.	Say I have higher SAT/ACT scores than I do.	+	1.91	1.73
30.	Falsely say I got all A's in important classes.	+	1.79	1.62
31.	Falsely say I come from an accomplished family.		1.76	1.49
32.	Falsely say I have a prestigious job.		1.74	1.44
33.	Say I have had job experience that I haven't.	+	1.71	1.55
34.	Falsely say I won a 1st place medal in a sport.		1.55	1.35
35.	Say I belong to a differnet ethnic group than I do.	+	1.26	0.96

Note: Items were rated using a 7-pt. scale (1=not at all willing; 7=very willing). SD=Standard Deviation. Items with an asterisk "" were added together to form a nonverifiable aggregate variable; items with a plus "+" were summed to form a verifiable aggregate variable. Verifiability was judged prior to calculating item means.*

conscientiousness, motivation to excel, ambitiousness, and sociability to gain admittance. Students were least willing to falsify their ethnicity, past athletic awards, job experience, job or family prestige, and grades or standardized test scores on a college application. As expected, a negative correlation was found between the student's ratings of their everyday honesty and their willingness to use deception, $r = -.35$, $p < .01$.

Students seemed less willing to exaggerate easily verifiable information about themselves. To test this idea further, the average response on eight easily verifiable items (mean score = 1.06, standard deviation = 1.40) was compared with the average response on nine more ambiguous items (mean score = 2.70, standard deviation = 1.72). A t-test comparing the two means showed that students were more willing to lie about information that would be more difficult to verify, $t(120) = 13.21$, $p < .0001$.

Discussion

Recent surveys have shown that lying and cheating are on the rise (Diekhoff, LaBeff, Clark, et al. 1996). Our research confirms that potential college applicants have definite ideas about what they are more willing to lie about to increase their chances of being accepted to a college. In general, high school juniors and seniors were more willing to falsify personal information that would be more difficult for an admission counselor to verify.

We also found that male and female high school students were equally willing to falsify information to a less prestigious college, compared to a more competitive school. They rated their chances of being accepted to a more competitive school as lower, however, ruling out the interpretation that they simply were not aware of the application condition specified in the instructions. Our hypothesis is that some applicants use deceit to meet the expectations that others have for them (Millar and Tesser 1988), to the extent that they cannot be caught. For example, it would be unwise for an applicant to report higher grades than received. To compensate for poor academic records, however, an applicant may exaggerate their motivation to achieve or goals for the future.

A few limits to this research need to be noted. First, this data was collected from a convenience sample from one high school, which limits the generalizability. Second, we measured individual's self-reported willingness to use a variety of deceptive tactics. We did not measure actual deceit or falsification on college applications. It is possible that some people resisted admitting how willing they would be to deceive. As such, the average willingness to lie or exaggerate on a college application may be higher than reported. Finally, our list of topics and strategies that high school students rated was not comprehensive. It is possible that students were willing to use a variety of additional tactics that were not measured.

Although guide books on applying to colleges encourage applicants to be accurate and honest, less is known about whether they follow these suggestions. We assume that some applicants use subtle strategies designed to make themselves appear to be a better candidate for admission than they are, some of which may be deceptive. Detecting deception or information designed to make the applicant appear to be more competent than they really are can be challenging, especially when the information is difficult to verify. For those who suspect deception used by a potential applicant, we offer the following thoughts.

It is important to realize that applications are replete with attempts to maximize one's perceived desirability and competence. As people manage their impression, some exaggerate their accomplishments and minimize their shortcomings, creating a profile that is less than accurate. By adding a few questions to applications or interviews that assess academic integrity, socially desirable responding, or impression management concerns, possible applicants who bend the truth may be identified.

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Time to Reassess the Application Essay

by Bruce Hammond

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An article in the February 28, 1997 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ought to have sent a chill down the spine of anyone who works in college admission. The piece profiled Ivyessays, a new business on the Internet that sells personal essays from successful past applicants. Students can buy packages that include work submitted to particular schools, or they can choose essays written by applicants with particular interests or life experiences. Ivyessays includes a gravely worded disclaimer that "plagiarism is unethical and illegal." No doubt the company would be shocked—shocked—to learn that some students might use them improperly.

As the pressures in college admission continue to escalate, more and more applicants are getting help on their essays from parents, school counselors, private coaches, and the Internet. To no one's surprise, those who benefit are usually the ones with the greatest financial means.

As a college counselor, I've always been puzzled at how little is made of the potential for abuse (conscious or unconscious) of the college essay. Think of all the hoopla over whether SAT coaching discriminates against low income applicants. Many of my students live in affluent households and often get such high-priced advice, but I have yet to be convinced that a $500.00 course is better preparation than a $15.00 book (especially when latter is written by the same people who sponsor the former).

Support Networks Not Created Equal

The advantage of well-informed help on the essay is much easier to document. I've seen plenty of kids with no clue about how to put authentic self-disclosure on paper but with enough savvy to get the help they need. They might go to an English teacher first, then me, then a second English teacher, then me again, etc. It takes intelligence to see the importance of getting such feedback, but I doubt that many colleges view the personal essay as a measure of skill in shaking down the advice network. Such know-how is a learned behavior that is much more in the culture at a school like mine than where the population is less privileged.

I wonder if any counselor really knows where advice ends and ventriloquism begins. Is it okay to flag spelling mistakes? Correct them? What about bad grammar? Word choice? Can the counselor suggest alternative words? Most of us would agree that general advice about the effectiveness of anecdotes is appropriate. Is it okay to suggest a particular anecdote in the student's background? What about suggesting a spin to put on that anecdote? Is there a difference between the first time a student comes for advice and the fifth time?

I suspect that most counselors have their own sense of what is right, but I'm willing to bet that the mark varies significantly. I think it would be useful for NACAC to consider clarifying its *Statement of Principles of Good Practice* with respect to college essays, and perhaps reinforce it with a fall mailing to counselors. NACAC articulates detailed guidelines on the competencies that counselors should master, and all of us aspire to do so. Similar direction where the conflicts of interest are more perilous would be welcome. In its absence, people on my side of the desk will continue to do our job—helping kids gain admission—and risk sliding down the slippery slope.

Colleges Must Respond

Colleges should also reassess their procedures. Many admission officers say they are aware that students get assistance on essays but maintain that they can usually spot such cases by reviewing grades, scores, etc. I'm not so sure. With today's rampant grade inflation, an "A" in English composition may not mean what it once did. Nor does blackening ovals on a standardized test necessarily correlate to writing well. I can't always predict which of my own students will excel in the personal essay format. A few write with such pizzazz that I know the work is theirs alone. As to others, I can only assume that it is.

A handful of colleges have procedures to address the situation. Highly selective Lehigh University requires no personal essay and instead asks for a graded academic paper to be submitted by a guidance counselor under the school's seal. "It gives us a sense of what students are handing in on a daily basis as opposed to a prepared essay where they may have gotten help," said Lorne Hunter, director of admission at Lehigh. I am especially intrigued by the approach used at Mount Holyoke College, which requires both an essay and a graded paper. "We're very interested in multiple ways of assessing student writing," said Jan Fuller, assistant director of admission. She added that the graded essay is "very useful in finding out what an A is" since standards vary widely among schools.

Colleges should also consider changing or rotating essay questions (as might the Common Application Group). The Internet is still in its infancy, and already Ivyessays features an inventory of more than 1,000. How many essays will it have in five years? 10,000? 100,000? Will the student who is, say, a junior rodeo champion and a concert violinist be able to buy an essay from an earlier applicant who had the same profile? More likely, students will have the chance to order mass quantities of successful essays from a particular college. If that scenario comes to pass, it might make sense for the College Board to take over administration of a personal essay that could be forwarded to participating institutions.

When I spoke to my friend Bill Conley, dean of admission at Case Western Reserve, he suggested that the time may be right for a comprehensive review of the entire application portfolio. Today's climate of hyper-self-consciousness is chipping away at the spontaneity and authenticity of college admission. As in sports, when the nature of the game changes, the rules must keep pace. Our profession is loathe to acknowledge the impact of such pressures, but we must do so if we hope to maintain a process that is fair to all.

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Disclosure and College Admission

by Scott White
Montclair High School, New Jersey

A student who has already been accepted into college is caught distributing a newsletter with anti-Semitic and racially offensive articles. Though the student's secondary school had no policy on this type of activity and the parents are challenging the child's suspension in court, the principal asks you, the counselor, to communicate the incident to the college the student plans to attend. What do you do?

A student is caught cheating on a test in the tenth grade. The student admits fault and receives a zero for the test. Though the school administration knows about the incident, it takes no additional disciplinary action. Two years later, when filling out the student's application form, how does the counselor answer the question: "Do you have reason to doubt the student's integrity?"

A student was suspended for smoking cigarettes in the ninth grade. Even though this behavior is not prohibited on college campuses, should the counselor explain this suspension on the student's application under the question: "Has the student been suspended or expelled?" Is that question more concerned with the violation of standards or with specific behaviors?

A student is charged with drunk driving after getting in a post-prom accident in which fatalities occurred. Is it appropriate to contact the student's college choice, even though the student has not yet been convicted of crime?

A student is out of school for two months for drug rehabilitation. Does a counselor violate the *Americans with Disabilities Act* if he or she honestly answers the application question: "Has the student ever had to leave school for an extended period of time?"

These questions bring up a number of issues regarding the interpretation of law and counselor liability, responsibility and integrity. To some, the answer to all these questions is clear: the counselor is ethically obligated to communicate anything that might be relevant to the college admission process and the counselor should trust admission officers' discretion and good judgment to decide how to best use the information. But for other counselors, such situations aren't always clear cut. "In this age of lawsuits and aggressive parents, counselors are unwilling to put anything down in writing in case parents try to subpoena the records if the student is not accepted," writes Michele Hernandez in *A is for Admissions*. "My personal opinion is that it is the counselor's professional responsibility to reveal any personal reservations, since colleges have no other way of knowing" (1997).

Bill Hiss, vice president for academic services at Bates College, states that "colleges want to know disciplinary information because we create residential communities, not just academic ones. We feel an obligation to try to create environments that are both safe and supportive for our students. Both for reasons of our campus safety and for our reputation in the community, we are not anxious to admit unknowingly the student who poses a genuine discipline or safety risk."

Choosing to withhold disciplinary information can sometimes affect the working relationship between a secondary school counselor and admission officers. Hernandez describes a specific case in which a counselor was not open about a student's deportment in the school. "I blame the high school for withholding this kind of important information, and to this day, I remember which high school it is. Admission people share this kind of knowledge with one another, so it is just not worth the risk to protect a student in order to get him into college. Once word gets out that your high school covers up major incidents, it reflects badly on the high school's reputation and on all the applicants from that high school" (1997).

Yet the college admission officer's need-to-know is balanced by the counselor's legal obligations. The two major pieces of legislation concerning the disclosure of disciplinary information are the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), also known as the Buckley Amendment, and the *Americans with Disability Act* (ADA). FERPA affords parents and students over the age of 18 the right to inspect and review educational records, the right to request amendment of the student's educational records and the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records.[1] FERPA does authorize disclosure without consent in cases of health or safety emergencies.[2]

There has been some confusion about who is covered by FERPA and about definitions of FERPA provisions. In 1996, the

NACAC Bulletin advised that "most public and many private schools are not bound by FERPA, because they have no financial involvement with the federal government." But David Berthiaume, the staff attorney for the Department of Education, says that "it is well understood that every public elementary and secondary school in the country receives Title I and other federal money and is thus covered by FERPA. FERPA also applies to all postsecondary schools which participate in the student loan program" (1998). Richard Rainsberger, however, writes in *FERPA and Secondary Education* that, "Private schools that do not receive federal funding administered by the Secretary of Education do not have to comply with FERPA" (1997).

Marybeth Kravets, a counselor from Deerfield High School in Illinois, comments that in addition to FERPA she is also bound by a very strict Illinois law, the *Illinois School Student Records Act*. She may not disclose confidential or disciplinary information without consent. "Disciplinary records, transcripts, recommendations, personal information, may *not* be released without the written consent of the parent (if the child is under 18) or student. Each release to each college requires a separate consent. According to Illinois law, you cannot disclose information on disabilities without consent. Federal laws (FERPA) require written consent. We interpret the law to say that releases require written consent unless it is an emergency and the risk is so significant that there is no time to get consent (i.e., it is happening today, yesterday, tomorrow) and we still must notify that the information has been released, what has been released and to whom it was released. This even applies to disciplinary records. Our policy is to release only academic information and verify the validity of only academic information."

"In Minnesota, all educational data except directory information is private and cannot be disclosed without the written consent of the parent or student," says Kathleen McCartin, the director of public services from the Perpich Center for Arts. "Since the students request that their transcripts be sent to colleges and disciplinary records are not a part of the student cumulative record, we do not answer questions about discipline asked by colleges because we have no consent."

Susan Biemeret, coordinator of college counseling at Stevenson High School in Illinois, remarks that "we should remember that it is not our job to be the 'cop' in the admission process. It is our job to serve as our students' advocates and our institution's representative in the college admission process...If I have to choose between serving a college's best interests to create a safe campus community and my students' need to have their privacy respected, I'll choose the student every time."

"If I knew one of my students regularly carried a concealed weapon," she continues, "I would not hesitate to call the admission officer at the school where this student had been admitted. Please note that this discussion would not happen while the school was still deliberating about a student's admission to school; to divulge such information during the college's decision process would violate that student's right to privacy in my view" (1997).

Others disagree with this approach. Carl Peterson, who is the counseling department chair at Forest Hills Central High School in Michigan and has a law degree, notes that, "As I read the federal regulations, absent more restrictive state legislation, I don't see a requirement that high schools need a specific consent for each release. In fact, it looks like we can release to a postsecondary institution and notify the parents after the fact, as long as we've told everyone up front that it is our practice to do so."

Bill Shain, dean of admission at Vanderbilt, and also an attorney, notes that "I am always surprised that schools withhold disciplinary offenses from college information. I cannot imagine this ever was legislative intent. In doing so, they undercut their own disciplinary process by removing a major sanction."

"The dilemma, in my opinion, is not found in the difficulty of reconciling colleges' requests for disclosure with legal guidelines," writes Mary Lee Hoganson of the Chicago Lab School in Illinois. "Rather, the dilemma is that school counselors can't have it both ways. We can't expect colleges to believe all the good things we say about our candidates—the 'dimples' if you will—when we decline to divulge our warts...While issuing a blanket statement that a 'counselor signature on a college application verifies only the academic record of any student' may protect a school from liability issues, it simultaneously condemns every student applying to college from that school to a cloud of inferred suspicion" (1998).

The two questions germane to this issue are whether disciplinary records are part of the student's educational record as defined by FERPA and whether FERPA allows the transmittal of such information in the college admission process without parental notification. Ellen Campbell, of the Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO), states that "disciplinary records are 'education records.' This is because FERPA broadly defines 'education records' to include all records that contain information that is personally identifiable to a student and which are maintained by the school."[3] The National Forum on Educational Statistics, which represents the education agencies of all 50 states, agrees with this definition. On their Web site, they state that disciplinary records are part of the education record and that "schools to which students apply for entrance may have access to education records without prior consent of the parent."[4] This stand is supported by FERPA regulation 99.31 which states that "consent is not required to disclose information...to officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll."

In a *New York Times* article, FPCO director LeRoy Rooker agreed that "Congress clearly intended that you could transfer information of a non-academic nature to an institution where a student was going to enroll" (1998). Campbell notes that "FERPA does not prohibit a school from disclosing any educational record to a prospective school. Section 504 and the ADA do prohibit colleges from seeking information regarding a student's *disability* in a pre-admission process." Though FERPA is quite explicit about the transfer of information in the college admission process, ADA is not. There are also very strict state and federal laws protecting the privacy of students who are classified or protected under Section 504. Eileen Hanrahan, a representative of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the Department of Education stated that a high school may honestly communicate the content of a student's curriculum, which may imply a learning or other disability, but may not disclose or discuss the disability itself without consent.[5]

Yet colleges have sought and continue to seek such information. According to Steven Syverson, dean of admission and financial aid at Lawrence University, the OCR required the university to remove questions asking counselors whether there were "factors that might interfere with a student's performance, either from discipline, chronic illness or emotional disability." Despite this ruling, the college applications of some of the nation's most selective colleges ask such questions as: "Has the student had to leave the school for medical or personal reasons?"; "Is the academic rank a true indication of the candidate's ability? If not, please describe the circumstances: for example, excessive absences, family problems, emotional or physical difficulties or disciplinary problems" and "has the student experienced any apparent emotional or physical disability which affected the candidate's performance or is likely to do so in college?"

It appears from the previous discussion that federal law allows counselors to communicate information, including discipline and disability information, which is germane to the college admission process, though Colleen Quint, a lawyer specializing in school law, cautions:

> Part of what fuels the confusion is that the language in FERPA is not clear and even 'official' interpretations of that language sometimes raise more questions. And whose official interpretations do we go with: the court's or the Department of Education's? Of course we need to remember that even if we find an answer to FERPA, that does not mean that we have the definitive answer on whether or not a particular practice has blanket approval; it merely shows that it is not a violation of FERPA (and therefore the institution does not risk losing federal funds); but that is not the same thing as saying that such a practice is permissible for all purposes.

The Office of Civil Rights also places constraints on the ability of colleges to seek this information from counselors and some states have more restrictive policies than those outlined in FERPA and ADA. How are the colleges to get the information they need without asking for it and how are counselors to decide what information is relevant to the college admission process? Certainly, the Common Application does not ask questions about discipline but most colleges that accept it still would like to know relevant information.

"If a college suspects that a student has been dishonest or misleading in questions about discipline or grades or activities, and wants the counselor to verify, what is our obligation to the student?" asks Howie Stein, guidance chair at High Point High School in Maryland. Bill Brown, director of college counseling at the Potomac School in Virginia, wonders, "Why don't (colleges) ask whether a student ever plagiarized or cheated or used illegal drugs? Isn't that what they want to know? The question about whether I have reason to doubt a student's integrity is bizarre. It ranks up there with their asking me to rank a student's sense of humor."

Counselors clearly feel torn and confused about their role in the process. "ADA needs to talk to FERPA," notes Kravets. "FERPA needs to communicate better with the public high schools. Each state needs to be sure that counselors and schools are educated on the specific state laws and whether federal or state laws take precedence. School boards make their own policies with differing opinions in the same state. Attorneys do not agree on the laws and here we are the 'sandwich' in the middle."

If it is a high school board's policy to communicate disciplinary information to colleges, it is wise and necessary to make sure these policies are clearly stated in written form and to let parents know that this is school policy. "I would think that if the data is specifically requested on the counselor recommendation form and the student gives me the form, then he is indicating that I should fill the form out. I always tell students that I will be honest," says Stein.

There needs to be more articulation between college admission officers and college counselors as to how to transfer information without breaking the law or opening ourselves up to unnecessary liability. The Department of Education and/or NACAC should provide links on their web pages to each of the 50 states' disclosure policies. A greater degree of responsibility must be placed on the student in this process. Students should be asked to report major disciplinary infractions on the secondary school report form and parents or adult students should be asked to sign a waiver for release of information on the form. "We have to find ways to put the onus on students to represent themselves accurately, rather than making this always the school's or counselor's job," says Hiss. Quint agrees. "When colleges ask the students directly about their disciplinary histories, and the subject then becomes obligated to respond, then the issue is not whether the counselor has legal authority to share the information but whether the student him/herself is submitting a truthful and honest and complete application." If a student was not truthful, Hoganson notes, "I would be more likely (and have in the past) to refuse to write a recommendation for a student who I know has lied. That gives the student a clear choice: be honest or forego my recommendation."

When considering issues related to disclosure, the W's should be taken into consideration:

What: Is the student a threat to himself or others? Is the student's academic integrity open to question? Would the action by the student be a violation of college disciplinary policy?

When: Did the offense occur recently or years ago? Is the offense an indication of the student's present character?

Where: Did the offense occur in school or at a school function? If a student is only accused of an offense out of school, or convicted but given a sealed conviction, disclosure can violate privacy laws.

Why: What does the action say about the student's character? Colleges want to know more about a student's behavior and character than just what disciplinary action was taken.

Who: Who has access to student disciplinary information? Is the counselor allowed by school policy or state law to communicate disciplinary information?

After the discovery, in 1995, that a student had killed her mother when she was 14, Harvard, which had asked about past criminal or disciplinary problems on the application, withdrew its acceptance. Following this incident, colleges have sought greater assurance that the information they receive is accurate and complete. At the same time, an increasingly litigious society has caused counselors to resort to coded recommendation letters and surreptitious phone calls to communicate information to colleges.[6]

A successful college admission process depends on mutual trust and open communications between college counselors and college admission officers. High school counselors should make sure that their school policy is consistent with both state and federal statue and be aware of areas where the two are not consistent. Admission counselors need to be sensitive to and aware of legal restraints which may exist on high school personnel.

"The less of a dialogue we have between college admission offices and secondary school counseling offices, the more we will base admission decisions on inaccurate information," notes Shain, "Silence, after all, is a choice of action, not a neutral response. It benefits the student who has had some kind of difficulty by keeping the infraction out of the college admission dialogue. In doing so, counselors are penalizing the students who have not had these difficulties, by making these two students seem parallel in their behavioral choices. This seems clearly unfair, to me anyway. In many cases, silence is a choice which is less ethical than thoughtful communication between educators would be."

It is also necessary for college and secondary school personnel to work together to define and articulate the best system to legally and effectively communicate the history and character of applicants.[7] College admission personnel need to decide and communicate what they really need to know. College counselors must let colleges know what they will and will not communicate and their justification for such decisions. Only with these conditions met can all students' best interests be served.

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Notes

1. A full text of FERPA can be obtained from the web page of the Department of Education's Office of Family Compliance (www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco.html)

2. Section 99.31 of FERPA states that "An educational agency may disclose...without consent if the disclosure is 'in connection with a health or safety emergency." Section 99.36 describes this emergency as "necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals. Nothing in the Act shall prevent an educational agency or institution from including in the educational records of a student appropriate information concerning disciplinary action taken against the student for conduct that posed a significant risk to the safety or well-being of that student, other students, or other members of the school community." In comments by the Department of Education on this issue, the following is noted "The Secretary interprets the statute to allow a school official to disclose information regarding disciplinary action to school officials in schools where a student is not in attendance. The Secretary believes that officials in other schools have a legitimate educational interest in cultivating a safe school environment...The Secretary believes this interpretation is consistent with Congress' intent. While this provision imposes a potential cost to students and parents, because educational records may be released

without their consent, that cost is minimal and is outweighed by the interests of others whose safety may be at stake."

3. In the case of the release of disciplinary record of college students to the public, there have been state supreme court rulings in Georgia and Ohio where disciplinary records were not defined by the courts as "educational records." Since these cases dealt with only postsecondary students and the release was to the public (not between educational institutions), it has limited applicability to this discussion. Look up the web site: www.splc.org/report/f97report/f97p19.html for details on this case.

4. The full text of this document is available at the web site for The National Forum on Educational Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/p97527/Appdx_a.htm

5. It would be best to get advice from your own school attorneys, though, if this issue arises.

6. Katherine Popenoe, then a senior admission officer at Princeton University, listed these examples from a *New York Times* article at a NACAC National Conference panel in 1991: "A child with serious emotional difficulties is described as having 'peaks and valleys'; saying a student 'likes to take risks' alludes to a drug problem and a cocky, arrogant student is said to be 'pushing against the limits."

7. The statement on Macalester College's application furthers this goal and should be considered for use by all colleges: "Students are guaranteed by law access to records kept by educational institutions. The admission committee needs reliable and candid references in order to make fair decisions. Therefore, to comply with the law and to preserve candor and reliability we ask you to instruct us as to the disposition of your comments:

_____ My recommendation may be included in the files of this student if he or she attends Macalester, and I am aware of the student's right to inspect and review the contents of the file.

_____ My recommendation is intended solely for use in the admission process and should be destroyed upon completion of the that process."

Rank Bellies

by Marna Shapiro

Retired, Lincoln Park High School, Illinois

These are obviously the days of the feel good rank-in-class as exemplified by the following:

- as many as 10 valedictorians in one class;
- the coexistence within one school of several kinds of ranks such as weighted, unweighted, one for each magnet program, one for each half, third, quarter of the class, etc;
- a wonderful invention (my personal favorite) called the "weighted rank" which keeps all ties at one number and doesn't skip the next (e.g., three number 4's with the next number being 5), thus relieving the class of a bottom and hey, the more ties the better;
- not letting students know their ranks until at least the junior year, the fact that they have much less of a chance to do anything about it notwithstanding;
- and, of course, dropping the rank completely so that students never have to feel the pain of knowing how they stack up academically, certainly not until they enter

the real world.

Well, I believe that all this overprotection is antithetic to the American capitalist system and is squelching the true competitive spirit and even the rights of our students. If you think about it, the ranking of a particular student is but a moment in time. Every second of the school day, students' grades are up and students' grades are down; students' grades are better and students' grades are worse. So what law says that the numbers have to be frozen and recorded only at the end of each term?

Just think of the characterisitics of the rank within the context of the world of finance. With the great technology we have now, the input every day from every class for every student could be kept track of all day long and voila!—the Rank-in-Class Markets. There can be the Weighted Exchange and the Unweighted Exchange (WE and UNWE), the Magnet Programs Exchange, the Halves of the Class Exchange, the Thirds Exchange, the Quarters Exchange—you get the idea. Probably the colleges, knowing them, will do a lot of trading on the Rank Futures Exchange. There will be more than enough diversity for blue chips, penny shares, and everything in between.

Meanwhile, back at the schools, electronic ticker tapes will show students where they stand at any given time. They will be able to control their own destinies all day long. To protect privacy, students can be represented by symbols. Some students may wish to create Boards of Directors and send out annual reports. And just as the College Board has conferred upon them the authority over when which SAT scores are sent where, so too will the students convey to the colleges whatever particular ranking at whatever particular second on whatever particular day they choose.

Of course, like their financial counterparts, the rank markets will be subject to fluctuations influenced by the vagaries of news and events. Some possibilities are—one of the valedictorians has the flu; the light finally goes on for someone near the bottom of the class (however low it may not go); someone doesn't hand in homework; someone does hand in homework; or maybe the Chairperson of the President's Council of GPA Advisors makes a cautious remark. What really convinces me that this idea of creating rank markets just like financial ones will prove to be positively providential is that every high school is already superbly equipped for it—every high school already has an opening and a closing bell.

This article was first published in the Winter 1999 issue of the Journal of College Admission.

Marna Shapiro is retired from Lincoln Park High School in Chicago, Illinois. Professionally active, she remains involved with NACAC, especially with Illinois' unique Active Retiree Committee. "Rank Bellies" is dedicated to former LPHS principal, Mary E. Shannon.

Ethics: My Turn

by Lois C. Mazzuca
Retired, Glenbrook North High School, Illinois

In the darkest hours of World War II when the powerful German Luftwaffe threatened the very existence of England, a greatly out-manned English Royal Air Force fought bravely and successfully held back the Germans. Winston Churchill, speaking before Parliament, said of the RAF, "Never before have so many owed so much to so few." To stretch the imagination, we can be the few that Winston Churchill referenced in the middle of the century. We, the counselors and the admission officers, are the few. Every student in a secondary school or a college is touched by us. When students come to us, they don't know what they don't know. We help them to know. In our respective insitutions, we are neither fish nor fowl. We're the counselor or we're the admission officer. We don't have the status of faculty. We are the facilitators of transition.

When one thinks of admission, I suspect the words that come to mind are transcripts, scores, essays—certainly not words like ethics, values, integrity. Yet, the origins of formal aspects of our profession have their roots in "ethical concerns."

For example, NACAC was born back in 1937 when 13 colleges came together to discuss developing a code of ethics to better guarantee student access to higher education and scholarships. That was 63 years ago. Now we say "access and choice," and we talk about packaging, gapping and discounting financial assistance. Have "things" really changed?

We are a society that is impatient, obsessed with the Dow, wanting instant solutions. We own 200 channel direct TVs (which we don't watch). We are tied to computers, modems, pagers and cell phones. We work in a world of payment-on-demand-yesterday with School Boards and Boards of Trustees that tend to see only the bottom line. Once upon a time, we received a letter or a memo through the mail, and we could read it and think about it. Now, someone is on the phone asking for our response to the letter or memo they just faxed. We don't have time to process or reflect in our faster world. We live in a culture that does not allow us to feel good about ourselves. Civility is almost out the window.

I don't pretend to have the answers nor know the questions to ask. I share my observations. Ethics to me is the principle of conduct governing an individual or a group.

We profess to say we don't like lists, books, magazines, rankings and/or comparisons. Yet, our publications include copies of these rankings. Every college wants the best, brightest, fastest, and smartest students in the universe. In the meantime, every secondary school claims to have the best, brightest, fastest, and smartest students in the universe. If those same students can kick a football, dunk a basketball, sing, dance and have the ability to pay, they become the golden dream. Truth be told, our best accomplishments are not taking the thoroughbreds to prestigious universities. Our best accomplishments are assisting those students with blemishes to believe in themselves and to assure them that there is a place for them. Do we always give all our students an opportunity? We say what's important is to assist students in finding the right match, help them to find their "comfort zone college." Yet, we work hard to allow colleges to come into our guidance offices and admit students on the spot. Almost like a school shopping network! We claim the media distorts what the transition process is all about, yet we whine if we are not one of the individuals the *Chicago Tribune* or the *Daily Herald* calls to find out "how it did" as measured by the Ivy count. We fear we won't appear to be competitive or expensive enough. What are we doing? What standards are we following?

We have a variety of admission procedures and guidelines in place, and the message is most confusing. Colleges have laid out requirements to be admitted and to be successful. However, the word "minimum" appears before many published requirements. The word, minimum, now changes the message. We're not saying to students "take a risk and be challenged." We have lowered the bar. Another and newer wrinkle to our messages... we now offer students the opportunity to be admitted with a fifth semester transcript. We are encouraging admission at a much earlier age. Why aren't we allowing kids to be kids and to enjoy high school? Why is it so important to admit students in February or March of their junior year? Surely, they don't know what they don't know. We, as well as the students, do not even know what courses they will be enrolled in during their senior year at that point in time. Apparently, senior year course work doesn't matter.

Last November, a senior asked me why. "Why, Ms. Mazzuca, why can't a common application truly be common?" Why can't colleges have a range of common essay questions? What we have effectively done is to make a process far more complicated than it needs to be—and we spend millions of dollars to do so. Applications are long, and financial aid award letters are confusing. We've created an environment of multiple test-takers, essays on the 'net. Applying to college takes on a life of its own for both students and parents. It becomes a full-time occupation. We keep the mystique of college admission in place.

Is it any wonder that high school students take a "so what" attitude toward cheating? They do it, see it, accept it. We have all experienced the student with the application completed at dad or mom's office. The embellished activity lists and essays from ghost writers, the "cocktail grapevine" has parents spending thousands of dollars for testing so their students can qualify for extended time testing or have 504 Plans in place. The rationale is quite simple—the competitive edge for admission. That's not to say that we don't have legitimate requests of extended time and 504s. We defer students, hold students, wait-list students. Is it any wonder students make multiple deposits?

As we add more complicated measures, qualifiers for admission, we create our own ethical problems. Have we incubated a virus? Lack of ethics, principles, mores is a virus and it grows.

I'm not here to cast the first stone. I see questionable applications, but can't prove anything. I see the ever-rising requests for extended time testing. I've asked questions about essays—so have all of you.

Abraham Lincoln became president—he was involved in a three-way race—with Douglas and Breckenridge. Lincoln certainly did not have the demeanor or appearance of a president. A fluke, a split vote, gave Lincoln the opportunity to reach his potential and become a great president.

We are not faceless people. We are the facilitators of the future whether we are at the secondary school or college campus. Our roles are unique. We are the link. We are the tenders of the bridge, and if we truly understand the marvels of a bridge (and I believe we do), it supports its own weight. Most importantly, no one part is more important than another. The bolt no more important than the beam. We support each other. We assist each other. We support and assist students to reach their potential.

Leadership is not unlike art! It is learning when and where to draw the line. Do we go with the flow or do we stand up for what we profess to be our profession—the facilitators of opportunity. This is a joint goal. Should our question not be: How complicated do our measures for admission need to be? Should our questions be: Can we provide the opportunity? Can we educate? Academic integrity is honesty, truth, fairness, responsibility and respect. Maybe the antidote for our virus is balance!

I believe we are the few. We are the facilitators of opportunity. We do make a difference.

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Lois C. Mazzuca has over 30 years of experience in the college admission process and has been involved with NACAC since 1968. Mazzuca retired in June 1999 from Glenbrook North High School (IL), where she was the college coordinator.

Acknowledgments

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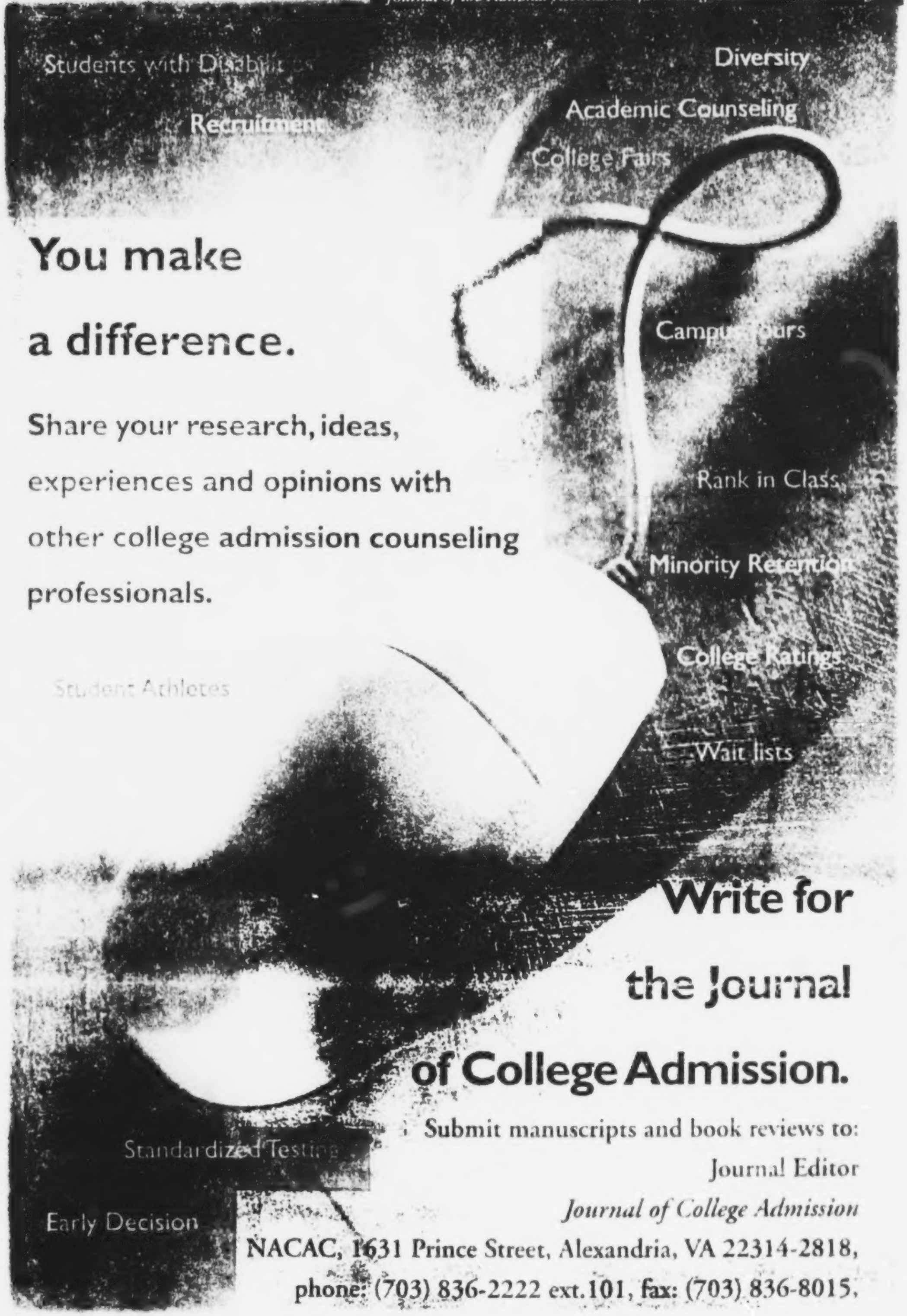
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A decision to accept, conditionally accept, or reject is made within six weeks. A conditional acceptance means that publication is contingent on the author making changes suggested by the board. The editor and author work together on the revision so that the final product also meets the author's approval. Because of deadlines, the editor maintains the right to make minor revisions without seeking the writer's approval.

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all material submitted including statistics, references, quotations, tables. The Journal Editorial Board reserves the right to determine if accepted manuscripts are used as a feature article, "Open Forum," or "On the Lighter Side."

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The Submission Process *(continued)*

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This award, presented by the Journal Editorial Board, recognizes the author who has made the most significant contribution to NACAC's *Journal of College Admission* during the past year or to authors of any material generated for original use by NACAC or one of its chartered state or regional associations. The Muir Award is presented at NACAC's annual conference.

Submissions are evaluated based on ...

Subject matter:

- Contributes new ideas to educational literature
- Balances theoretical and practical information
- Is based on solid research methodology (if a research piece)
- Is timely and informative
- Promotes sound professional practices and ethics
- Appeals to counselors and admission officers

Writing style:

- Is clear, concise and logical
- Is unbiased (unless an opinion piece)
- Avoids educational jargon
- Uses examples or models

Nuts and Bolts

Form

Manuscripts must be submitted on white paper of standard size (8 1/2" X 11"). All text, including references and quotations, should be doublespaced and left justified on the page. Submit an original and one copy. Manuscripts may also be submitted on Macintosh formatted 3 1/2" disks. Disks must be accompanied by hard copies, as described above. Place drawings, tables, and charts on separate pages.

Make a cover sheet for each copy of the manuscript showing the proposed title of the article plus complete identification, phone number, and address for each author.

Length

Length should be determined by the scope of your topic. Be concise, but provide all necessary information. Manuscripts generally range from 2,500 to 5,000 words, (10–20 pages double-spaced) for all feature articles and research articles. "On the Lighter Side" and "Open Forum" articles should range from 750 to 1500 words.

Keep paragraphs short. Structure your manuscript to include subheads. The article's title article should be short, descriptive, and interesting.

Style

The *Journal* conforms to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (14th edition) and the Webster's ninth *New Collegiate Dictionary*. The editor revises all manuscripts following the guidelines for grammar, punctuation and spelling found in these two texts. **Document sources according to the author-date system described in Chapter 16 of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.** This method utilizes parenthetical references in the body of the text and provides a full citation in a bibliography. Endnotes are used only for substantive notes that are supplementing the main text.

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When an extended quotation or table is taken from a book, report, or related publication, written permission of the publisher must be secured by the author prior to submission. Such permission must accompany the manuscript and proper credit must be given in a citation.

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When writing ...

- First decide the purpose of your article and then organize your material by sticking to the main point.
- Don't brood about impressive openings. Get to the point.
- Keep your readers in mind, not your scholarly peers.
- Rewrite clichés and avoid educational jargon as much as you can.

After you write a first draft. ...

- Put your manuscript away for a day or two. Then read it from the beginning to end and begin revising. Make your opening sentences interesting, attention getting, and specific. Don't start with, "The purpose of this article is ..."
- After you've spent as much time revising as you spent on the first draft, let another person read your revision and offer suggestions for further improvement.

Before you send it to NACAC ...

- Read the manuscript for organization.
- Make sure it has a topic sentence or paragraph, a beginning, middle, and conclusion. Look for: undeveloped themes; weaknesses in logic; changes in viewpoint or tense; faulty connections; and confused chronology or sequence of ideas.
- Read the manuscript for clarity. Make sure the reader knows your article's who, what, where, why, when, how much, and how many. Look for: material omission; abstract, ambiguous, or misplaced words; unusual terms or obscure references; unfulfilled promises; murky antecedents; nonparallel structure.
- Read the manuscript for conciseness. Look for: overlong sentences; passive verbs; long strings of nouns and adjectives; unnecessary, repetitious, and irrelevant words; duplication; over-emphasis; second thoughts; self-evident statements; and circumlocution.
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Guidelines for Book Reviews

Before writing an appraisal of a book, the reviewer should list the author, title, publisher, city, state, the year of publication, cost, total number of pages, and identify it as hard- or softcover.

A book review should attempt to cover the following areas, not necessarily in the order they are listed, but as they fit into the reviewer's style and organization.

- What is the purpose of the book?
- Reviewer's evaluation of the author's purpose.
- Does the author fulfill his or her purpose?
- What specific needs of the counselor does the book meet?
- What special contribution does the book make?
- What impact do timeliness, style (bookish, popular, etc.), thoroughness, organization and clarity have on the book's quality?
- What weaknesses does the book have?
- Reviewer's recommendation with specific reasons.

Provide brief examples from the book to support your comments.

Preferred length is 600 to 800 words.

Proofreading Tips

- Look at one line at a time.
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- Remember errors come in clusters.
- Check numbering.
- Check the alphabetical order of the works cited, then verify the spelling of all names and titles.
- Use the active voice.
- Use short sentences.
- Have clear antecedents.
- Use short words.
- Be clear.
- Use figures of speech sparingly.

Send submissions to:

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If you have questions, please call:

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extension 101

The Journal of College Admission Ethics Series

The Journal of College Admission Ethics Series is the first significant body of literature on ethics in college admission published by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. The series is a select compilation of articles on ethics published in the *Journal of College Admission* in 1998 and 1999. The book is an excellent source of information for both the beginning and experienced counseling professional. It is also a great tool for parents who want the inside scoop on ethics in admission and other professionals in higher education who want to keep abreast of ethical issues in the field.

About the Editors

Elaina C. Loveland is the current editor of the *Journal of College Admission.*
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